Rugby Union International: England 11 South Africa 29

Springboks run England ragged

Robert Armstrong

ENGLAND's status as second-class citizens of world rugby was cruelly underlined by an emphatic four-try defeat by the Springboks that could have been far more severe.

The loss of their most positive back Mike Catt with cuts and concussion which will rule him out of Saturday's game against New Zealand compounded England's woes, once again highlighting the current dearth of eligible fly-halves in English rugby.

The gloom that shrouded the team after they had been outclassed at Twickenham will be difficult to shift as they prepare for an exercise in damage limitation against the All Blacks. Apart from brave defending, England had very little to offer against the tide of green and gold that all but swept away the hosts in an intimidating second half.

It was England's biggest home defeat in points conceded and their fifth successive game without a win, their worst sequence since 1984. Fortress Twickenham has lost the aura of the early nineties; this year England have won only one home game, against Wales. Clearly the habit of losing is as easy to acquire as it is difficult to reverse.

Clive Woodward maintains that he has a limited pool of Test-standard players from which to pick a team capable of taking on the best. Nevertheless the England coach has not always made best use of those players; for instance Tim Rodber, a genuine big-match player, ought to have been selected for the Springboks game.

"We ran out of legs in the second half," Woodward admitted. "I was trying to get fresh people on but everything seemed to go against us and we lost a bit of composure. The penalty count (12 against) was horrendous."

Apart from Rodber, England desperately missed Martin Johnson, whose one-match ban for punching deprived the team of a Lion who understands how to put Springboks on the back foot. It is inconceivable that South Africa's Mark Andrews — he scored one try while Adrian Garvey, Andre Snyman and Werner Swanepoel got the rest — would have given such a towering line-out performance had Johnson been there. As it was, Danny Grewcock and Garath Archer, who were both disadvantaged by Richard Cockerill's poor throw-in, did their most effective work in the rucks and mauls as the Boks rolled forward. England's only try came from Nick Greenstock.

Woodward will have to pick the Northampton fly-half Paul Grayson for the New Zealand game, and Richard Butland of Bath is likely to be a bench replacement. Neither has played more than a handful of competitive games for his club this season though both have looked fresh and committed in their representative appearances. Grayson had little ball to work with after he came on as a substitute for Catt in the second half.

Elsewhere, England have hard choices to make. Adedayo Adebayo has been the only wing to establish a consistent physical presence, yet the Bath player was inexplicably dropped for this game. If Phil de Glanville, who was sidelined because of a twisted ankle, proves his fitness, the Bath centre should be recalled alongside Will Greenwood.

It promises to be a close call at No 8 between Richard Hill and Chris Sheasby, a substitute for the last 25 minutes. Hill has been put in an invidious position since losing his No 7 shirt to Neil Back, who was outstanding in attack and defence, proving he is a Test open-side of rare quality. Lawrence Dallaglio also enhanced his reputation with a formidable work-rate.

Woodward made pertinent points about the self-defeating structure of English competitions, which foster Celtic and overseas talent to the detriment of the home-grown product. Unless more England-qualified players gain experience by participating in the European Cup, the Rugby Football Union will struggle to put together a team good enough to complete in the first division of Test rugby.

The Premiership clubs want to expand the top division from 12 to 14 clubs, which would increase the aggregate of Englishmen performing at the top level, yet the uneven quality of the competition raises questions about its value to England. As every Sky TV subscriber knows, the southern hemisphere Super 12 tournament is light-years ahead of anything Europe has to offer in terms of pace and power.

For now, England must put their anxieties about player development to one side and focus on the searching examination they face from the All Blacks. Last week John Hart, the New Zealand coach, continued to admonish England for their "disrespectful" attitude to the haka, that potent symbol of the All Blacks' challenge; now England have to dig deep into their own wounded psyche to find the means to stop the next haka gliding inexorably into an embarrassing rout.



Winning ways . . . Andre Snyman heads for the line PHOTO: MIKE HEWITT

Wales 7 New Zealand 42

All Blacks in a world of their own

Ian Malin

THE All Blacks have won all 11 of their Tests this year and in doing so have scored 5?5 points. As Kevin Bowring, Wales's thoughtful coach, admitted afterwards his side, in matching the pace of the All Blacks, were "playing on the edge of our skill levels".

In one of the game's many defining cameos Kevin Morgan, the 20-year-old Wales full-back, a skilful player but whose schoolboy-looks make him appear like Arwel Thomas's big brother, counter-attacked in the first half from deep within Welsh territory. He was stopped by a teeth-rattling tackle from his opposite number Christian Cullen.

The All Blacks quickly recycled the ball and seconds later their right-wing Jeff Wilson was almost over in the corner, stopped only by a desperate tackle from Nigel Walker.

Cullen is exactly a year older than the Pontypridd player yet he has scored 21 tries in 21 Tests. He is a phenomenally fast elusive player. And yet, while Englishmen still talk about a certain Wembley hat-trick of goals here 31 years ago, John Hart, the All Blacks coach, did not want to dwell even on Cullen's hat-trick of tries. "I just finished off the moves, mate" was Cullen's own modest assessment of his sensational effort.

Instead Hart preferred to dwell on the midfield skills of Walter Little. "Walter was our stand-out back," he said. "His attacking qualities and work-rate were excellent today and his tackling was vital. He and Frank Bunce created all sorts of problems for Wales."

But in this All Blacks side individuals are rarely singled out; it is all for one and one for all. At northern hemisphere firesides this winter there will be many discussions as to whether this All Blacks side are the greatest of the modern age.

Many single out Andy Slack's 1984 Grand Slam-winning Australians as the best. Yet British rugby was at a very low ebb when the Wallabies that autumn beat England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. After last summer's Lions triumph the best of British actually fancied their chances against the All Blacks, who will certainly make it 12 out of 12 at Twickenham on Saturday.

This New Zealand side are the best of modern times. They have no weaknesses and possess a ruthless, mean streak that all great sides must have. The expression on the hooker Norm Hewitt's face when he was substituted by Sean Fitzpatrick in the second half made the blood run cold. He was livid. Yet Hart said: "Norm had a barnstorming game today. He showed great courage and commitment." And all the thanks he got was to miss the last 25 minutes.

Cryptic crossword by Logodaedalus

Across

8, 9 Very healthy when qualified like one having to cheat (2,3,2,1,6)
10, 24 Being a Guard, Field Marshal accepts single bid (4,4)
11 See bird stir by river behind Baltic port (10)
12 Leak what Houdini used to do (6)
14 Without warning, Miss Stubbs has things for sale (8)
15 Miserable one on the Continent very quietly cutting up animal food (7)
17 Impudent talk otherwise noticed outside The Oval (7)
20 Wading bird burning with love (8)
22 Small chicken uncovers black insect in the morning (6)
23 Early reconnaissance flight to draw plan precisely (4, 6)
24 See 10
25, 26 Meat dish to cool by carving maybe with bamboo (recipe inside) (6,3,5)

Down

1 Butcher has two donkeys at home (8)
2 See 24 down
3 Talk indistinctly with Brigitte Bardot in strong wind (6)
4, 19 Tough problem to address. Left over from Christmas? (4,3,2,5)
5 Behind everyone in spite of everything (5,3)
6 New maid needs helping in this regard (10)
7 Piano to rent by contract with respect (6)
13 Dangerously preparing for fight to carve up friend (10)
16 This ode is of a bank code and card I mutilated (8)
18 Answer half disturbs start of Suzie Wong's last work (8)
19 See 4
21 Turner coops up love and hate (6)
22 Don't be brief! Feel welcome! (6)
24, 2 Dinner at Eight? Tale revived in silent play (4,4)

Last week's solution

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Kyoto fails test on climate crisis

Paul Brown in Kyoto

WHEN Al Gore addressed the climate summit this week he emphasised that the 10-day conference marked only the start of efforts by the 163 signatories to the Climate Change Convention to tackle global warming by reducing man-made emissions of greenhouse gases.

The United States vice-president was in effect apologising for the failure of the Clinton administration to deliver more than minimal targets for reducing his country's huge contribution to the rising levels of carbon dioxide in the world's atmosphere. The US accounts for 22 per cent of the world's emissions.

The problem, as everyone at the Japan summit knew, is that to avert the potential catastrophe of world climate change in the next century the US has to tackle its profligate lifestyle, or everyone else will suffer.

Despite two years of preparatory meetings before Kyoto the conference still managed to achieve little. So many issues remained unresolved that most important decisions had simply to be put off. Another conference has already been set for Argentina next November in an attempt to sort some of them out, and another will be needed in 1999.



Gore: offered minimal targets for reducing huge US emissions

The slow progress at Kyoto was chiefly due to the intense lobbying by the fossil fuel industries, which had attended all the pre-conference negotiating sessions and done everything in their power to obstruct progress on limiting CO_2 emissions. Even Mr Gore drew attention to the coalition of oil and industrial interests, comparing them to the tobacco companies that for so long denied smoking was harmful to health.

But the focus on the world's climate has never been so great. With 1997 coming in on queue as the warmest year on record, and with the world currently suffering the most severe El Niño effect yet, the climate conference could not have been better timed. It was ironic that two of a series of weather-related disasters this autumn — bush fires in Australia and floods in California — hit the two countries doing most to prevent progress at the talks.

Although Kyoto was supposed to fix targets and timetables to tackle climate change for the first 20 years of the next century it is clear that much more will need to be done.

The agreement at the Earth Summit in 1992 for developed countries to limit emissions to 1990 levels by 2000 was voluntary and simply did not work: CO_2 emissions have continued to rise almost everywhere except in eastern Europe, where economies have collapsed since the Berlin Wall came down.

This time any deal is supposed to be legally binding on all developed countries, but no method has yet been devised of making it so. Some form of fine system for non-compliance, which will be used as a fund for improved technology for the developing world, has been proposed.

At Kyoto, there were long and sometimes angry exchanges about "sinks" — schemes for tree planting to trap carbon in growing wood or other methods of removing carbon dioxide from the air. The science of how much CO_2 is removed by trees is still in its infancy and the inclusion of such schemes in the Kyoto protocol was regarded by some participants as an attempt to create a loophole for evasion.

Another idea — to trade emissions between countries by which notional blocks of CO_2 emissions saved by one country could be sold to another — also proved controversial since it would allow the US to use dollars to buy carbon savings made by more forward-looking countries and so protect its own extravagant way of life.

Given the complexity of the issues, it is not surprising that Kyoto failed to resolve them. However, political delay cannot disguise scientists' growing alarm at the consequences of inaction.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said if the world's climate was to be brought back to a safe level, it needed a 60 per cent reduction in global emissions of greenhouse gases. This cutback was required from the whole world, not just the developed countries that have so far signed up to reducing their CO_2 levels.

The vital next stage is to conscript the rest of the world. Although they resisted any limitation targets until after the Kyoto conference it is clear that countries such as China will soon have to control their own output of greenhouse gas.

One new disturbing scientific fact emerged from Kyoto at a presentation given by the UK's Hadley Centre for Climate Change: the global rise in the sea level, a particular threat to the 36 members of Aosis, the Alliance of Small Island States, is apparently unstoppable.

Significant drop . . . An Indian health worker gives polio vaccine to a baby in New Delhi, one of more than 122 million children under the age of five who received the vaccine last weekend as part of a national programme to eradicate the disease from the country by 2000 PHOTOGRAPH: KAMAL KISHORE

China furious as Clinton meets Wei

Lena H Sun in Washington

CHINA'S most prominent political exile, Wei Jingsheng, was welcomed to the White House by President Clinton on Monday and said afterwards that he had urged Mr Clinton "not to be deceived" in his dealings with Chinese communist leaders. In negotiating with Beijing, Mr Wei said that he advised the president, "Do not pay before the goods are delivered."

Despite public objections from China to any official United States contact with Mr Wei, the president met the dissident for 35 minutes in what officials described as a private meeting. It took place in a West Wing study near the Oval Office. The US national security adviser, Sandy Berger, also attended the session.

Beijing was swift to condemn the meeting. "This act of the US side is totally wrong," a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Tang Guoqiang, said. "The Chinese side expresses its strong indignation and firm opposition to the meeting."

The White House did not immediately issue any statements about the content of the meeting. But Mr Wei, speaking to reporters, said Mr Clinton received him "very warmly", expressed concern about the human rights situation in China, and "listened and smiled" when he offered his advice on the importance of being tough with the Chinese communist leaders.

"I believe he's very smart and will not be easily deceived," Mr Wei said. He said the two men promised to keep in touch.

Mr Wei, aged 47, spent nearly 18 years in jail or labour camps for championing freedom and democracy before prison authorities told him that the only way he would receive medical treatment for a variety of illnesses would be to accept medical parole and go to the US. He arrived in Detroit on November 16.

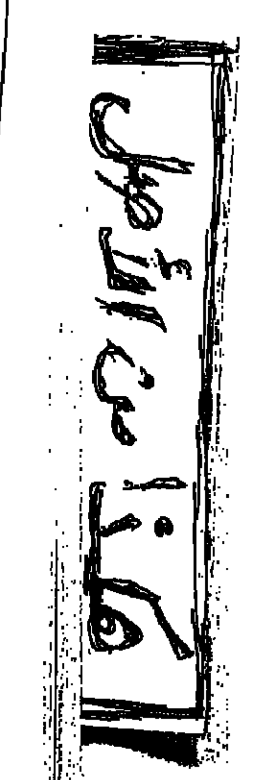
The White House has emphasised recently that human rights is just one of the important issues in its dealings with China, a position that human rights advocates have criticised. Mr Wei's session with the president was handled gingerly, with the administration hoping to show its commitment to human rights without unduly annoying China.

Mr Clinton could have chosen to meet Mr Wei while in New York for a human rights reception on Monday to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but officials chose the symbolism of the White House, where the Chinese leader, Jiang Zemin, received a red carpet reception in October. However, officials omitted the visit from Mr Clinton's public schedule, declined access to news media photographers and did not provide details of the encounter.

Part of the reason for the deliberate low-key approach is that US officials say they do not want to jeopardise ongoing efforts for the release of other Chinese political prisoners, including the former student leader, Wang Dan.

Asked why he had warned the president about being deceived, Mr Wei said that unlike the West, the Chinese communists do not have rule of law. "They can make any promise and go back on any promise," he said, likening it to a sports competition where one side plays by the rules and the other "doesn't have to". — *Washington Post*

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,600	Switzerland	SF 3.80



Arming the poor in the battle against Aids

CHILDREN are the theme of this year's World Aids Day but the danger with the theme, and the day, is that we may isolate both — as if HIV only matters one day a year, and as if children are separate from the rest of the population, with or without HIV (Orphans feel force of the Aids storm, December 7).

The truth is that HIV is with us all year round, all across the world. Most of its sufferers do not have access to clean water, adequate housing or the basic healthcare that might be taken for granted in developed countries. Children live in households with HIV where whole generations are being wiped out by starvation and war, before many of the symptoms that people experience in the West have even started to emerge. People fleeing from such situations find themselves ostracised and penniless on the streets of richer countries, such as Britain, seeking asylum while benefits are removed.

In Britain, children and young people living in households with HIV are not immune. Such households may experience poverty, unemployment, histories of injecting drug-use, poor housing . . . and are then subject to the pressures on community-care budgets, and unequal access to new treatments for the symptoms of HIV.

We have to overcome the inequalities in health and social care provision, in the UK and worldwide, if people with HIV, including children, are to be cared for as well as everyone else. At the same time, the messages that are given to children and young people need to encourage equality, along with a positive outlook on life.

This World Aids Day we need to see positive moves in the UK: for an equal age of consent at age 16, for repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act banning the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools, and for withdrawal of the proposal to make the transmission of conditions such as HIV a criminal offence — as this would increase the likelihood of driving HIV underground by discouraging young people from coming forward for testing, advice or treatment.

We have to end the discrimination surrounding HIV. A good start would be to remove the barriers, such as those related to gay sexuality and represented by the cuts in benefit brought in by the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. HIV is a disease, not a "disorder".
John Nicholson, HIV Alliance,
Neil Gerrard MP, Chairman, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Aids,
Dr Evan Harris MP, Lib Dem health spokesman,
Manchester

IGNORANCE is not driving the Aids epidemic — surveys conducted in developing countries show that the vast majority of people know about HIV and know how it is transmitted.

Poverty and inequality are its motors. The forces that place people at risk are the economic conditions that make men leave their homes to search for work far away from their families, or that make women resort to prostitution, and the social conditions that make it so hard for a wife to say "no" to the husband or partner she suspects of infidelity. These principal causes are growing, not shrinking.
James Deane,
Panos Institute, London

French lessons to be learnt

IN REFERENCE to your article "Lost for words in Francophonia" (November 23), let me first congratulate John Ryle for pointing out that since the defence of the French language has become a top priority on the agenda of the French ministry of foreign affairs, this could lead us to attempt to ingratiate ourselves with many a dictator in the world, such as Laurent Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Hun Sen in Cambodia.

However, there is no such thing as a place called "English Street" in Phnom Penh. It is "Phlou 184" (Street 184), with a Khmer name as well. It is far from having English language schools "from one end to the other".

Furthermore, before the creation of the Alliance Française (now the Centre Culturel Français) at the end of 1989, there were also a number of private schools that taught French in Rue 184. Now they have no reason to exist, since the French language is competently taught, mostly by Cambodian teachers for a minimal charge against which no private school can compete, to a vast number of Khmer speakers. If Cambodia is to be taken as a model by the British, then the latter should also give a substantial place to the French language.

The Cambodian scene still remains a good illustration of the point Mr Ryle is making: Charles Twining, for instance, until recently the Khmer-speaking United States ambassador to Cambodia, did not hesitate to come in person to the support of opposition politicians and human rights workers when threatened by thugs from the various gendarmerie (trained by the French), police and military forces of the powers that be, while the ambassador of the *patrie* of human rights has tended to prefer to remain cosily and safely cloistered inside his palatial residence.
David Henri Locard,
Lyon, France

No love lost for Lovelock

I WAS surprised by your boundless enthusiasm for James Lovelock, whom most environmental activists regard as the Margaret Thatcher of ecology (Visionary inventor, November 2).

In reviving the 19th century vitalist conception of the Earth as an organism, Mr Lovelock presents a conception of life — or Gaia — as the Invisible Hand of Nature and of unlimited technological expansion as humankind's Manifest Destiny. While he writes feelingly of the devastation wrought by cars, cattle and chainsaws, he speaks with contempt of those who would limit expansion and tread lightly upon the Earth.

In Gaia, he calls environmental activists "ruthless manipulators" who provide "a rich pasture for demagogues". He blames them for causing the oil shortage in the 1970s. In Ages Of Gaia he turns his ire on his fellow scientists who would ban fluorocarbons. In a Newsweek interview last year, he dismissed opposition to nuclear energy as an echo of a communist plot.

Mr Lovelock's inventor's conviction that new technologies will render open-ended expansion harmless understandably makes him the favourite ecologist of the industrial establishment — and of those among the deep ecologists who would rather commune with nature than seek to save it. It is not altogether clear that it qualifies him for a Nobel prize. Perhaps you ought to be just a bit more circumspect in your choice of heroes.
Erazim Kohak,
Prague, Czech Republic

FRED PEARCE'S article on James Lovelock and his Gaia hypothesis needs a brief rebuttal. The complex adaptations of living organisms arise through a cumulative process of change in which successively better adapted lineages displace their ancestors. This process of natural selection is simple and well-confirmed, and seems to be the only process that contributes substantially to evolutionary change.

The idea is clearly absurd, because there is no large population of variable worlds within which competition and selection can occur, whereas if selection occurs at a lower level there will be no systematic tendency for this Panglossian best of all possible worlds to evolve. If it is based on some principle other than selection, then this principle should be specified explicitly in such a form that it can be tested by experimental and comparative analysis. No such principle has yet been identified.

At the same time, the idea is clearly attractive, presumably because of a desire to believe that the world operates for the general good. It is attractive enough, indeed, to merit a whole page in the Guardian Weekly, where Fred Pearce argued with great enthusiasm that Lovelock should be awarded the Nobel Prize. For Literature?
G A C Bell,
Molson Professor of Genetics,
McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Guilty parties in Cambodia

NICK Cumming-Bruce's article "Cambodia's new harvest of death" (November 9) was a cold war-style bashing of the country, assimilating the current government to Pol Pot.

A group of gunmen on the royalist Funcinpec side, with their own records of brutality going back to the early 1980s when they fought alongside the Khmer Rouge against the government, were wiped out by long-time rival gunmen who currently give their support to Hun Sen in a mini civil war. This conflict began to loom at least as early as the royalist machinations in 1994 to sneak the Khmer Rouge into the government by a back door, and the frustrated royalist coup of that year.

No one in Phnom Penh could have been ignorant of the responsibility of both sides in the coming conflict, and the step-by-step ratcheting up of tension was chronicled in detail by the local press.

It is understandable, and wise, that "some Western diplomatic missions in Phnom Penh [indeed the most important] . . . view the killings as a distraction from the main issue of whether elections will restore stable government" to the country, now that the most corrupt and incompetent faction has been eliminated.
Michael Vickery,
Universiti Sains, Penang, Malaysia

Briefly

AS TONY BLAIR favours tobacco and targets single mothers the blunt reality of his class politics punctures the imaginary bubble of New-Labour-One-Nation nonsense. Jesse Jackson's address to the North American trade union convention in Pittsburgh in October has similar resonance in Britain as Bill Clinton and Mr Blair merge into one: "We see corporate capital unrestrained ... we see political parties locked at the hip, two parties with one assumption, one party with two names, both captured by their wealthy campaign donors, both engaged in the search for the 'vital centre' while our people search for the 'moral centre'."
Paul Laverty,
London

I AM deeply ashamed at the way my country of birth treats a large part of its population (November 23). When I emigrated to New Zealand from Germany I was given full civil rights, including the right to vote, after one year. I urge the German government to join the civilised world and at least grant full civil rights to all German-born people. It is long overdue that Germany stop discriminating against ethnic minorities.
Sabine Pahl,
Hamilton, New Zealand

I HESITATE to disagree about anything with John Mortimer (Higher lunacy from the Upper House, November 30), but now that the House of Lords has served the laudable twin purposes for which it was established (seeing off Michael Howard and providing the material for John Wells's gloriously entertaining book) isn't it precisely the time to close the place down and find something better?
Chris Murgatroyd,
Kathmandu, Nepal

YOU reported that the very brave nursery nurse who protected the children in her care with her own body against a machete wielding man, was awarded the second-highest civilian bravery award (November 23). What do you have to do to receive the highest award? Isn't that enough bravery?
R Morrish,
Tolo, Greece

RICHARD WILLIAMS and I clearly didn't see the same film. He saw something called Seven Days In Tibet and I saw a film called Seven Years In Tibet (November 30). I was not alone in having tears pour down my face during the battle scene, the Tibetans crushed by the advancing Chinese. Even if the only thing the film provokes is discussion about the plight of a people and their country, it surely deserves more of a balanced review than it got.
Nicola Davis,
Paris, France

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German army played host to neo-Nazi

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE German defence minister, Volker Rühe, acted last weekend to try to limit the damage from the latest scandal of neo-Nazi activity in the German military as it was confirmed that the top brass had invited a convicted neo-Nazi terrorist to lecture army officers.

His ministry ordered an inquiry into how Manfred Röder was commissioned to address young officers at the army's élite Hamburg leadership academy. Opposition politicians urged the chancellor, Helmut Kohl, to answer before parliament for the incident and sack Mr Rühe.

Mr Röder lectured officers on the resettlement of ethnic Germans in the Russian Kaliningrad region, previously German east Prussia and a nostalgic focus of extreme nationalist activists.

A former lawyer, he is ex-leader of the extremist German Action Group. He served eight years of a 13-year jail term after being convicted in 1982 of organising bomb attacks on foreigners' hostels in which two Vietnamese immigrants were killed. He is on the extremist blacklist of German counter-intelligence.

Defence officials revealed on Monday that several months before his lecture Mr Röder was given an army lorry as part of aid intended for Russia, organised by a charity of which he was vice-president.

According to the Hamburg news weekly Der Spiegel, the head of the military training academy invited him to speak to young officers in 1995. The defence ministry said that the organisers of the lecture would be disciplined, and that Mr Rühe sought to assert a hardline policy against neo-Nazi sympathisers in the military.

"We're getting ruthless with any individual soldier using rightwing slogans, behaving intolerantly or found in possession of neo-Nazi propaganda material," Mr Rühe told the tabloid newspaper Bild am Sonntag last weekend. "We'll use all legal means, including punishment and discharge."

The disclosure of the 1995 incident follows several highly embarrassing cases of virulent extremist activity among conscripts and junior officers. Home-made videos have shown troops engaged in mock executions, mock rapes and simulated torture, and chanting and singing Nazi and anti-Semitic slogans and anthems.

A rescue worker inspects the tail of the Antonov-124 cargo plane that crashed into a block of flats in the Siberian town of Irkutsk last week. More than 60 people died
PHOTOGRAPH: ANATOLY MALTSEV

Yeltsin slashes Baltic force

James Meek in Moscow and David Fairhall in Brussels

RUSSIA is to make deep cuts in army divisions and naval units on its western frontier, President Boris Yeltsin said last week, undermining the Baltic states' case for speedy Nato entry and effectively acknowledging that there is no Western military threat to his country.

The surprise move will leave little more than a thin screen of Russian ground troops between European Russia and its Polish, Baltic and Scandinavian neighbours after January 1, 1999.

"Russia will unilaterally reduce — and I am saying this for the first time — by more than 40 per cent its land and naval units, especially in northwestern Russia," said Mr Yeltsin. "We want our common border not to divide us but to make us closer, to become a border of peace, not strife."

Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian foreign minister, later clarified the statement, saying Mr Yeltsin had meant northwestern Russia only.

The cuts were confirmed in Brussels by Marshal Igor Sergeyev, the Russian defence minister, after the first meeting of the Nato-Russia permanent joint council. He said the troop reductions would take place in the Leningrad military district, the Northern and Baltic fleets and the enclave of Kaliningrad, sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania. The cuts had become possible because the region was "relatively stable".

At the Brussels meeting, Washington agreed to boost its support for Moscow's attempts to reform and cut the Russian army. The military-to-military agreement signed in Brussels covers 1998. It is the latest step by Moscow and Washington to help Russia reduce and safeguard its nuclear arsenal and give Pentagon help in such areas as developing a professional non-commissioned officer corps in Russia.

"I don't think there is any question that the Russian military is a deeply troubled institution," Walter Slocombe, the United States defence under-secretary, said.

Mr Yeltsin's announcement is a far cry from the breast-beating rhetoric from the Russian military establishment during the run-up to Nato enlargement decisions earlier this year. The talk then was of counter-measures against Nato and of packing the Leningrad district and Kaliningrad with extra divisions.

Moscow remains opposed to the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joining Nato. But Mr Yeltsin and the pragmatic Mr Primakov and Mr Sergeyev seem to have concluded that they have a much better chance of delaying entry by showing Washington, Berlin and London that Russia means peace than if they tried to intimidate the Baltics with a show of force.

The Baltic states have already rejected Mr Yeltsin's offer of "security guarantees". As well as the cuts, he tried to woo them anew with talk of hotlines to Kaliningrad, joint control of Baltic airspace and exercises in coping with disasters.

The cuts will take place against the background of a huge planned reduction in the Russian armed forces, which will see their paper strength cut by half a million men to 1.2 million by the beginning of 1999.

Dmitri Trenin, a military analyst at Moscow's Carnegie Foundation, said Russia's financial crisis would probably force it to cut the army to below 1 million men.

Mr Yeltsin's Swedish hosts were relieved that he was reading from a prepared text last week, suggesting his proposals on arms cuts were not being made on the spur of the moment. His minor slip-up was nothing compared with his performance the previous day, when Russian spin doctors tied themselves in knots trying to explain his breaches of protocol.

Mr Yeltsin interrupted a formal occasion with King Carl XVI Gustaf to scold a feuding businessman and minister, astonished listeners with a plan to slash nuclear warhead numbers that turned out to be bogus, mixed up Sweden with Finland, and described Germany and Japan as nuclear powers.

Thousands starving in New Guinea

John Aglionby in Jakarta

GOVERNMENT apathy is leaving hundreds of thousands of people to starve to death on the island of New Guinea, aid workers said last weekend. More than 1,000 have died from famine and drought-related diseases, and experts say the situation will deteriorate. Half the island is independent Papua New Guinea, the other half the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya.

More than 1 million people in Irian Jaya and an unknown number in PNG, living in mountainous jungle, now depend on air drops for food.

The problem is not that there is insufficient food, but that it does not reach those in need. There are fewer than two dozen helicopters and aeroplanes to make food drops in Irian Jaya, and a similar number in PNG.

A United Nations spokesman, Fritz Loebus, said: "There is masses of food in the warehouses but it cannot get to the starving people. It is simply a question of logistics. There are not enough aircraft and there is not enough fuel."

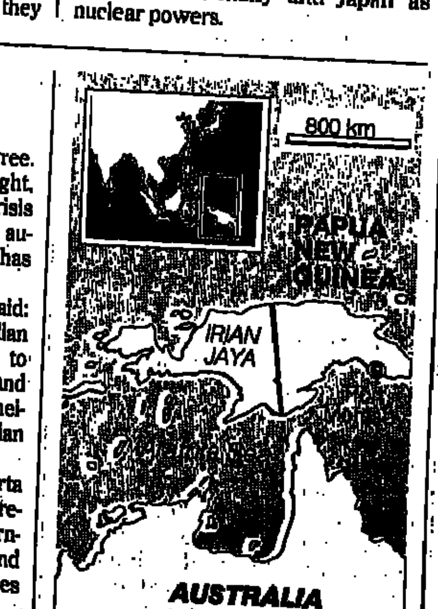
A spokesman for the governor of Irian Jaya said: "We are doing all we can for the starving people, but they live in very isolated areas that take days to reach. We cannot be blamed for what is going on."

Non-governmental organisations in PNG and Indonesia disagree. They say that while the drought, frost and fires that caused the crisis are natural phenomena, it is the authorities' fault that the disaster has reached these proportions.

One Indonesian activist said: "Three months ago the Australian government sent four teams to PNG. They visited 500 villages and wrote a 1,000-page report. But neither the Papuan nor the Indonesian government took any notice."

A Western diplomat in Jakarta said: "I am sceptical that Jakarta really wants to help. For the government the area is the Wild West and they leave it up to the missionaries to distribute aid."





The Week

AN HISTORIC treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines became reality when 121 countries signed the accord in Ottawa. But the United States, Russia, China and most Middle Eastern states are staying out.
Aid linked to treaty, page 8
Washington Post, page 15

INDIA'S president, K R Narayanan, dissolved parliament and called early elections, expected in February, after both the Congress party and the rightwing Bharatiya Janata party failed to muster sufficient support to form a government.

MILAN MILUTINOVIC, an ally of the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, and an ultra-nationalist, Vojislav Seselj, face a run-off for Serbia's presidency after neither secured an overall majority in the first round, initial official results showed.

AN OFFICIAL report on the 1994 Estonia ferry disaster, in which 852 people died, singled out design faults in the vessel as the main cause of the disaster. The ship's German constructors rejected the study.

NEW ZEALAND'S first woman prime minister, Jenny Shipley, was officially sworn in, taking over from the outgoing prime minister, Jim Bolger, as leader of the centre-right ruling coalition.
Power trip, page 23

IRAQ said it would not export any oil until the United Nations approved its plan for distributing food to its people under a renewed oil-for-food programme.

BANGLADESH signed a peace treaty with rebels to end 24 years of insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which has claimed more than 8,500 lives.

POLAND said it would return money recovered from Swiss bank accounts to its rightful owners, including Holocaust victims and their families.
Nazi victims' fund, page 5

GAMA'A al-Islamiya, the Islamic militant group thought to be responsible for last month's massacre of tourists in Luxor, said that it would no longer target foreign visitors. It said the men responsible for the massacre of 62 people were a rogue element, contradicting an earlier claim of responsibility.

PAKISTAN'S president, Farooq Leghari, resigned following weeks of confrontation with the prime minister, Nawaz Sharif.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, the former president of the Soviet Union, has signed an advertising deal worth more than $165,000 with US giant Pizza Hut to promote their deep pan and thin 'n' crispy pizzas.



Islamic conference helps polish Iran's image

Kathy Evans in Tehran

A STREAM of kings, presidents and sheikhs arrived in the Iranian capital this week for a Muslim summit that diplomats say will usher in an image of international respectability for the republic.

The eighth summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference is the biggest diplomatic gathering hosted by Iran since its Islamic revolution 18 years ago. It has been scrambling to adapt to its new responsible image. The usual political slogans and graffiti about "global arrogance" appear restrained. At the airport, where normally visitors are met with grim, bearded faces, guests were welcomed by smiling, clean-shaven students.

The OIC summit, which includes some of the West's best friends in the Arab world, comes at a time of growing disillusion among the world's 1 billion Muslims about the West's failure to commit itself to such causes as Palestine and Kashmir. Concern is also increasing at the use of punishing sanctions against four Muslim states.

Last month a number of Arab governments, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, boycotted a United States-backed business conference in Qatar designed to cement the ailing Middle East peace process.

In contrast, Tehran, the one Muslim capital long opposed to the peace accords, is expected to host some 27 heads of state and 6,000 senior ministers and officials.

This unprecedented diplomatic triumph is due to be followed by another this week when it assumes the presidency of the OIC for the next three years. Iranian officials say that hosting the conference demonstrates the hollowness of US claims that Iran is a pariah.

Tehran's heightened profile comes as divisions between Europe and Washington are widening over policies towards Iran. Last month European ambassadors returned to Tehran after a six-month absence, which followed a German court verdict convicting Iranian security officials of the murder of Iranian dissidents.

Washington, in contrast, has no appetite for any thaw in its relations with Iran's ayatollahs. "America cannot ever forget those 444 days," said Irfan Parvez, a senior editor on Iran News, referring to the 1980 seizure of US diplomatic hostages.

For Iran, the priority is the cementing of its warmer relationship with Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states. For years, the Gulf states have accused the ayatollahs of attempting to export revolution and sponsoring terrorism in the region.

For both sides, the conference has great religious significance, narrowing the centuries-old divisions between Shia Muslim Iran and the larger Sunni Muslim community. When Iran assumes the OIC leadership, it will mark the first time the Muslim community has been represented internationally by a leader from the minority sect.

The most telling symbol of this religious harmony came two weeks ago when Saudi Arabia sent to Tehran the *Kaaba kiswa* — the black cloth that is draped over the Kaaba in Mecca. The cloth, considered sacred, is to dominate the walls of the conference hall.

Despite such positive signals, the conference negotiations are expected to be fraught with problems. Terrorism is likely to be at the top of the agenda. Algeria, Egypt and several Gulf states believe Iran's ayatollahs to be the main sponsor of the militant groups operating in their countries.

The issue of Palestinian statehood being declared is also likely to discussed, along with what to do about the almost defunct peace process. Conservative Arab states are trying to keep the process on track, but Iran does not even recognise the existence of the Israeli state.

Resolutions have also been drafted about human rights and treatment of women and children under Islamic law. Only three of the summit delegates are women.

Hutu raid frees genocide suspects from prison

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg

HUTU extremists in Rwanda mounted their biggest raid to date last week, freeing from prison more than 600 men accused of genocide. The attack on the jail at Bulinga, 50km northwest of the capital, Kigali, was the latest success for the Hutu rebel strategy of targeting prisons holding more than 100,000 people — mostly Hutu men — accused of participating in the slaughter of Rwanda's Tutsis three years ago.

A similar raid earlier earlier in the week freed more than 100 accused mass murderers from a prison in northwest Rwanda.

At least 10 people, including four guards, were killed in the latest attack by about 300 Hutu rebels armed with automatic weapons, machetes and spears, according to the army. The local military commander, Colonel Balthazar Ndengeyingha, said the raid was swift and successful — all the prisoners escaped.

It was a blow to the government's attempts to quell the growing insurgency, especially as it came in the heart of the country, suggesting that Hutu rebels feel confident enough to move around at will.

Rwanda has suffered a new rise in bloodletting and instability since the mass return of Hutu refugees from the former Zaire after the Rwandan army's invasion a year ago. No longer able to seek shelter across the border, extremist militias have regrouped inside Rwanda. They had previously concentrated their attacks on the northwestern regions of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri, strongholds of the late Hutu president, Juvenal Habyarimana, whose murder by even more extreme elements of his own party triggered the genocide.

About 300 people were killed at Gisenyi prison last month in a rebel operation to free prisoners. The army said more than 1,000 rebels attacked the jail. Most of the dead were prisoners. Hutu extremists also tried to seize Gisenyi airport, but were driven off by the army. About 80 people were killed.

The Rwandan military commander in the northwest, Colonel Nyamwasa Kayumba, estimates the rebel force at about 10,000 men. The army accuses Hutu civilians of sheltering the extremists.

Hutu rebels are also seeking out Tutsi genocide survivors and murdering them in their homes — in some cases to prevent them testifying at genocide trials. Local authorities believe that in some cases Hutu neighbours identified the victims to their killers.

The army has responded with attacks on rebel strongholds, but civilian casualties are high. Foreign human rights groups accuse government forces of indiscriminately killing unarmed Hutus during the raids to drive out extremists.

The army denied accusations by a Hutu exile group last week that it killed 8,000 civilians in a cave in the northwest. The government said the area, around the volcanic caves in the Virunga mountains, was a favoured base for Hutu extremists.

● A United Nations team hunting for evidence of massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo arrived in the northwestern town of Mbandaka on Monday to start their much-delayed investigation.



Load of bull . . . Steer wrestler Todd Suhn and his animal briefly swap places during the national rodeo finals in Las Vegas. Seconds later, the steer was brought down PHOTOGRAPH: LENNOX McLENDON

Israel and Turkey forge stronger links

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

ISRAEL and Turkey shrugged off Arab condemnation of their mutual relations and took another step this week towards forging a strategic alliance as their defence ministers met in Ankara to discuss military co-operation.

Yitzhak Mordechai arrived in Turkey for a three-day visit, the first by an Israeli defence minister.

Turkey, which has a mainly Muslim population but a secular constitution, was the object of a thinly veiled attack by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference for its military links with Israel.

The Turkish defence minister, Ismet Sezgin, dismissed the rebuke: "This resolution is not binding for us. We will continue our co-operation because we believe peace in the region can only be established through such work."

Mr Mordechai added: "The main objective of our relations is to strengthen peace in the region, it is not aimed against any other country."

The defence ministers are expected to set a date — probably early next year — for naval war-games in the eastern Mediterranean involving the Israeli, Turkish and United States fleets. The Turkish government has rejected widespread Arab criticism of the manoeuvres.

They will also discuss Israel's $675 million contract to upgrade Turkey's ageing F-4 jets, a planned contract to update Turkey's F-5s, and the production in Turkey of Israel's main battle tanks, the Merkava.

The high-profile visit — Mr Mordechai was due to meet the prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, and the chief of staff, General Ismail Hakki Karadayi — is the latest sign that Turkey has abandoned its policy of balancing its relations with Israel and the Arab world.

Netanyahu offensive, page 13

Death penalty sought in abortion cases

Adam Easton in Manila

WOMEN in the Philippines who have abortions and the doctors performing them will face the death penalty if congress approves a bill being supported by the government.

Senator Ramón Revilla, a former actor, proposed the bill after reading newspaper reports of foetuses being dumped on the streets in rural provinces.

The bill, which defines abortion as a "heinous" crime on a par with murder or rape, has been backed by the health minister.

The United Nations has described the Philippines, which is a staunchly Roman Catholic country, as already having "the most severe abortion laws in the world".

A foetus's right to life is enshrined in the 1987 constitution, and under the existing revised penal code abortion is illegal except in circumstances where the mother's health is at risk. Offenders risk a minimum of six months and a maximum of six years in jail.

But Mr Revilla says these penalties have become "outmoded by the changing times, what with the dynamic growth of society and the ultra-liberal policies brought about by the influential Western culture".

If the bill passes through both houses, the maximum penalty for women who have abortions would be life imprisonment or death. Physicians performing the operations would face the same penalty.

The health minister, Carmencita Reodica, said: "We support the bill and we fully agree that abortion is a heinous crime. Prevailing public opinion agrees on imposing stiffer penalties on abortionists."

The Philippines' Protestant president, Fidel Ramos, has been pursuing a population control programme since 1992. The Catholic Church has opposed the programme. Earlier this year Manila's archbishop, Cardinal Jaime Sin, said condoms were "only fit for animals", and prominent members of the Church boycotted the international Aids conference in Manila last month because free condoms were issued to delegates.

The Church, while not sanctioning the use of the death penalty, favours strict abortion laws.

The health department estimates that 17 per cent of women in Manila have had at least one abortion. Treatment of post-abortion complications ranks as the top reason for admission to hospital.

Mr Revilla's office said the bill could pass through congress within two years.

Fund to help Nazi victims

Richard Norton-Taylor

DELEGATES from 40 countries ended an international conference on the fate and origins of Nazi gold last week with a new fund to help Holocaust victims and put pressure — notably on the Vatican — to open archives that could shed new light on the whereabouts of loot stolen during the second world war.

Though the unprecedented gathering in London was marked by bitter exchanges between the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and Switzerland, the chief recipient of Nazi loot, most delegates insisted it gave a belated impetus to get closer to the truth about an issue on which many countries have still to come clean.

Stuart Eizenstat, the United States commerce under-secretary, described the conference as a "landmark event" and urged those present to find the truth by the millennium. "We have a collective responsibility to leave this century having spared no effort to establish the truth and to do justice," he said.

He announced that the US Holocaust Memorial Museum will host a second conference next year to concentrate on other assets looted by Nazi Germany, including works of art, bonds, insurance policies and property.

Six countries — Argentina, Austria, Croatia, Greece, Luxembourg and Poland — agreed to contribute to a fund set up by the US and Britain for Holocaust victims and their families. But so far only Britain, with $1.7 million, the US with $3.8 million and Austria with $8.7 million have come up with figures. France has not agreed to contribute.

But these sums are dwarfed by the amount of gold and other assets looted by the Nazis. A new study commissioned by the Swiss government estimates that it received about $3.4 billion in gold stolen by Hitler's Germany. Mr Eizenstat said Switzerland, whose banks have set up a $189 million fund for Holocaust victims, had now recognised what he called its "debt to history".

However, Israel last week said a 1946 agreement between Switzerland and the Allies should be renegotiated. The Allies agreed that Switzerland should repay only 15 per cent of the amount of looted Nazi gold that was known to be in Swiss banks. The WJC says Switzerland still owes up to $2.9 billion to Holocaust victims.

The Vatican, which was represented at the conference by two "observers" from the Holy See, came under heavy pressure from the US and other countries to open up its archives, officially closed for 100 years. The WJC released a declassified letter from the US treasury which showed that in 1946 the Americans were told that money and gold stolen from Jews and Serbs were sent to the Vatican.

The funds, stolen by the fascist Ustashe regime in wartime Croatia, were sent through a Vatican "pipeline" to Argentina and Spain, according to the letter. But the US treasury said that the reports may have been a "smokescreen".

Lord Mackay, the former British Lord Chancellor who chaired the conference, said afterwards that Vatican representatives had "made no observation at all".

Thomas Borer, leader of the Swiss delegation, acknowledged that it would take years to repair Switzerland's image. But he added: "Switzerland has emerged from this conference with its burden somewhat reduced."

UK seized gold, page 10

EU to end tobacco ads before 2007

Stephen Bates in Brussels

TOBACCO advertising and sponsorship will be banned in European Union states within nine years, a historic meeting of health ministers in Brussels decided last week.

After a long and sometimes frantic day of horse-trading between ministers from the 15 member states, the agreement reached — secured by 62 votes, the minimum number needed — effectively ends advertising in four years, most sponsorships in five, and all tobacco industry support for sports events by October 1, 2006.

That gives Formula One nine racing seasons to end its association with the industry: much longer than most EU members wanted.

The deal gives members three years to ban general tobacco advertising, a further year to phase out advertising in the press, another year to end tobacco sponsorship of most sports and arts events, and a further three years to end sponsorship of international "world class" events, including Formula One. During that period the sport will be expected to reduce its dependence on tobacco sponsorship and decrease advertising.

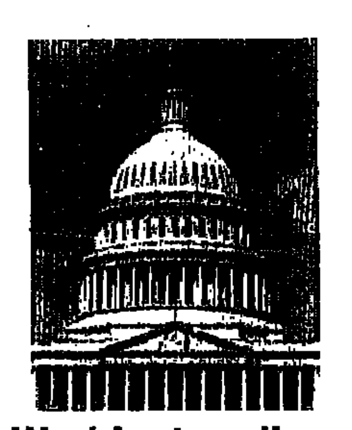
Germany and Austria opposed the agreement; Denmark and Spain abstained.

The social affairs commissioner, Padraig Flynn, said: "This is a huge day for the public health of the European Community. We are trying to protect people against the advance of cancer, and in particular young people from taking up the nasty habit of smoking."

It has taken the Commission nine years to achieve a deal to end all tobacco advertising except at shop counters. Officials and diplomats were relieved to settle the issue.

Agreement was reached at the expense of the EU's lofty aspirations for a speedy ban, which were submerged during long and undignified deal-making. Spain, which previously supported the ban, changed its mind — as a favour to Germany, which has the biggest cigarette industry in Europe and has been the firmest opponent of a ban.

Gephardt steps out on the road to 2000



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

COINCIDENCE or not, but two things happened within the short space of a couple of hours last week that suddenly gave the contest for the Democratic party nomination to succeed Bill Clinton a much clearer shape.

The first, which was widely anticipated and widely reported, was the announcement by the United States attorney-general, Janet Reno, that she would not be recommending the appointment of a special prosecutor to examine allegations of illegal fund-raising telephone calls by Clinton and by Vice-President Al Gore.

Officially, the predetermined White House response to Reno's decision was described as "no gloating". Clinton did not even make an official comment. But the big smile on Gore's face as he broke off from a school visit in Connecticut to face reporters within minutes of the official announcement told the real story. Gore knew that he was now in the clear, and that for him the path to 2000 lay open and inviting once more.

Shortly after Gore had offered his soundbite in Connecticut, the second event took place 100 and more miles up the coast, and was less fully reported. For that same evening, the Democratic party leader in the House of Representatives, Congressman Dick Gephardt, got to his feet in the Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and delivered himself of a richly important speech — or at least so he hopes.

Gephardt's speech was as well-prepared as Gore's soundbite, and although it may not in the end have as powerful a bearing on the outcome of the 2000 presidential election as anything Gore may say, Gephardt's lecture, entitled "Our Core Democratic Values", marked the formal beginning of a serious attempt to prevent the vice-president from inheriting the White House from Clinton.

Gephardt referred to neither Clinton nor Gore by name. But nor did he make any serious attempt to conceal his target. "There is a dangerous vacuum where principled politics should be," he announced early on. "Today the political process has largely become an echo chamber of petty charges, a parade ground for poll-driven manoeuvre. Too often our leaders seem enamoured with small ideas that nibble around the edges of big problems."

Later on, he returned to this visionary theme. "Pragmatism," he said, "as important as it is, cannot be a substitute for the principles that give us purpose and direction." He contrasted himself with "some who now call themselves New Democrats, but who set their compass only off the direction of others, who talk about the political centre, but fail to understand that if it is only defined by others it lacks core values, and who too often market a political strategy masquerading as policy."

Then towards the end of his speech Gephardt came back to the point. "This will be an era of small issues in our politics only if fearful and calculating politicians make it so," he said. And he called for a Democratic party in which "principles trump tactics", and which was "a movement for change, and not a money machine".

These barely concealed attacks on Clinton's political style and values were dotted around a speech that was essentially a call for a return to some traditional Democratic policy concerns — in particular, middle-class living standards, health provision and overwork — that Clinton has tended to leave alone or has glossed over. Gephardt's speech duly laid claim to the tradition of Roosevelt, but this time Teddy as much as Franklin, picking up ideas popularised by writers such as Sidney Blumenthal and E J Dionne to extol the need for "a new progressivism for a new century".

In one sense, Gephardt's move merely confirmed what has been widely understood and already expected. Gephardt's critical speech followed his leadership of the devastating mass defection of House Democrats against Clinton's autumn "fast-track" trade authority bill. Together, that vote and this speech define the Democratic party's current turn away from the Clinton agenda and, if nothing else, prepare the ground for Gephardt's expected run for the nomination in three years' time.

The immediate situation is that the split in the leadership of the Democratic party could not be plainer: on the one hand, the party leader and president — apostle of New Democracy, arch-practitioner of triangulation, fund-raiser extraordinary, political incarnation of everything that the Gephardt speech attacked; and ranged against him, on the other, the depleted party's principal congressional office-holder — advocate of New Progressivism, the friend and defender of the labour interest, and now the self-proclaimed man of vision and traditional Democratic principle.

The political consequence is that unless Clinton and Gephardt can produce a *modus vivendi* next year, the Democratic effort in the mid-term congressional contests will be held hostage to the contest between Gore and Gephardt for the presidential nomination two years afterwards. The immediate signs are that neither side is disposed to compromise. Clinton's immediate reaction to Gephardt's speech was to allow an aide to launch a stinging attack on the Missouri congressman and to cancel a planned meeting with him on educational policy. Gephardt's aides hit back by claiming that the president spoke only for a minority in the party, who believed that "the best approach to the '98 elections was a status quo one".

THIS is a long-term divide, and it is a divide about something more than candidates for the presidential nomination, important though that aspect of it is. For Gephardt is beginning to articulate a political programme as well as a candidacy. He is now indisputably the most important opponent of the view, summed up in a recent New Yorker magazine article, that Clinton's New Democrats and Tony Blair's New Labour represent "a historic transatlantic development — a third way between traditional liberalism and conservatism". In defiance of claims that Clinton and Blair have found the key to modern politics, Gephardt stands for something more inherently plausible — that Clintonism is now just about all washed up. That doesn't mean he will be the next US president — but it certainly puts Gore on the spot.

Waterloo lost in corridors of Brussels

Europe this week

Martin Walker

WHEN Tony Blair and the crew dreamed it up over the Cabinet table, it must have seemed quite a jolly wheeze to launch Britain's six-month stint at the presidency of the European Council of Ministers at Waterloo station in London. The foreigners could hardly object to this choice of the station from where trains depart for the Channel tunnel, even while French and British alike would get the symbolic point that it was named after a British victory over an earlier grand scheme to create a unified Europe under Napoleon.

But the foreigners got their retaliation in first. Brussels, the administrative capital of Europe which is run by an unholy alliance of French bureaucrats and German bankers, is not famous for its surprises. Grand projects are conceived, gestate with ponderous predictability, proceed through consultation, dispute and wrangling, and in the fullness of time are brought forth. But last week saw three unusual surprises. They might almost have been called ambushes.

The neatest was the German ploy to frustrate and delay the campaign to ban tobacco advertising across Europe. This had already caused great embarrassment to the Blair government, which had sought an exemption for the profitable Formula One motor racing industry. It is said this had nothing to do with the £1 million donation to the Labour party by the sport's chief organiser, Bernie Ecclestone.

Still, Britain was prepared to go along with the ban if Formula One cars were permitted to continue promoting cigarettes for some years. The European Commission in Brussels devised a suitable form of words about "events on a world scale", and Britain's 10 votes on the European Council would have got the deal a sufficient majority, despite the opposition of Germany, Denmark and Greece.

But then the Germans struck. Or rather the Spaniards did, changing their vote "as a political favour to the Germans". The majority then collapsed. But then the Greeks were bought off with a promise that their roadside kiosks could continue to carry tobacco ads, and the deal was on again, with nine profitable seasons ahead for Formula One.

The second German ambush has rather nastier implications for the Blair government, which hopes to mark its presidency by formally opening the negotiations to enlarge the European Union. The cunning of the German ploy was revealed when the European parliament voted last week by a massive 373 to 28 votes for all 11 new applicant countries (except the less than democratic Slovakia) to start the process of joining at once, setting the stage for a new row at this week's EU summit in Luxembourg.

The vote threw into new confusion an issue that the Commission (and Britain) thought had been settled with its strong recommendation in July to pick out the six most advanced countries and defer negotiations with the rest. The Commission plan to divide the sheep from the goats by picking the six countries deemed ready for entry and the five that were not was "inappropriate, both on the political or economic level", the parliament declared. The Commission proposed starting with Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus. It wanted to defer the applications of Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia.

The member states are themselves divided, with Sweden, Denmark and Greece supporting the "regatta plan", under which all 11 applicants start the process at once. Spain and Portugal, although more concerned about the costs to them of enlargement, also lean to this view. Cynics claim that the regatta plan is a device to delay the entire process. The crucial vote of Germany, which Britain had assumed was sure, turned wobbly after the German delegation in Brussels proposed "the principle that every candidate is participating with the same opportunities and on the same terms".

The EU has been surprised both by the support for the regatta plan, led by Sweden and Denmark in Baltic solidarity with Latvia and Lithuania, and by the power of the lobby on their behalf. An array of Europe's elder statesmen, led by the former German chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, the former Spanish prime minister, Felipe Gonzáles, the former Portuguese president, Mario Soares, and the former French prime minister, Michel Rocard, have backed a special appeal for Lithuania.

THOSE who argue against selection claim that it will produce a new division of Europe, with dire geopolitical and economic consequences for those deemed unfit for membership in the first wave. The Commission's counter-argument is that the process is flexible enough to bring in those currently excluded as soon as their economies — or in the case of wretched Slovakia, the state of democratisation — warrant.

The final ambush was an exquisite French phrase, which slid a stiletto into British pretensions to be part of the policy-setting group for the single currency, even before joining it. "Monetary union is like a marriage," suggested the French finance minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, after fending off nearly 12 hours of argument from his British counterpart, Gordon Brown. "And in a marriage, you don't want outsiders in the bedroom. Inevitably, the relations between those of us who share a currency will be more intimate than with the others."

This was a battle Britain should not have waged, because it had no chance of winning. This informal policy-setting club for the euro was always going to meet to agree the euro club position before meetings of Ecofin, the regular Council of all 15 EU finance ministers. On delicate matters such as setting external exchange rates for the euro, those whose new national currency it is have a vital interest in conferring together that clearly outweighs British (and Swedish, Danish and Greek) objections that they are being excluded from a group that looks like becoming increasingly important.

"This problem emerges not because of the single currency members needing to meet, but because of those EU members who do not wish to join the single currency," Strauss-Kahn added. Still, Blair made a rather better showing on the Formula One racetrack, and perhaps he can wangle some face-saving compromise at the Luxembourg summit. He could begin by reminding Helmut Kohl that Waterloo was as much a victory for Prussia's General Blucher as for the Duke of Wellington. What a pity the Duke spurned Blucher's suggestion to name the battle after the pub where they met, La Belle Alliance.

Kabila hires Mobutu's spin doctor

Chris McGreal in Kinshasa

PRESIDENT Laurent Kabila might not put it this way, but he is hoping Dominique Sakombi Inongo can do for him what he did for the late despot Mobutu Sese Seko.

For 25 years Mr Sakombi was his information minister, head of the sole political party and governor of Kinshasa. But his most celebrated role was behind Mobutu's infamous "authenticity" campaign, hailed at the time as a rebirth of Zairean identity. Like so much under his rule, it was a vast con.

Now Mr Sakombi is back, this time as image-maker to Mobutu's nemesis. President Kabila has yet to win the hearts of most of those he rules by decree.

"I didn't go to Kabila, he came to me. We reached the conclusion that his image needed to be improved," Mr Sakombi says. "I have experience in that field. I discuss all aspects of the country with the president. I conceive ideas and propose them."

Mr Sakombi is installed in Kinshasa's top hotel. He sits with a crocodile-skin briefcase at his feet and the nervous smile of a man who has had a lucky escape. When he was at Mobutu's side he was really working for a greater good, he insists.

"God placed me next to Mobutu so I could see what he was doing in order that I could denounce it. I was working for God, not Mobutu. I was working to expose him," he says. But for most of those years, Mr Sakombi kept silent. It was only in 1989 that he spoke out after, in his own words, discovering God. Then he quit politics and took to television.

Mr Sakombi is also keen to ensure that no one thinks he made money serving the late dictator. "I worked for 25 years with President Mobutu and I didn't receive a thing from him, not even a bicycle, not a house, not a company. I earned my money honestly. I bought my house. I did not steal like others."

Others are more sceptical. Congo's new Office of Ill-Gotten Goods, which is trying to recover billions of dollars worth of cash and property stolen by Mobutu and his cronies, says it has forced Mr Sakombi to hand over his bank accounts. He denies this.

A former teacher with a degree in physical education and communications, he does admit there was a "dark period" in his life. Aged 57, he has 15 children by nine women. "I had many women. I was into darkness before I discovered the light."

His shining moment was the invention of the authenticity campaign. Zaireans were ordered to dump Western names in favour of African ones. The suit disappeared in favour of the *abacost*, so named as an abbreviation of the French for "down with the suit". As it turned out, the campaign — along with the Zaireanisation of the economy — was a cover to plunder the country's wealth in the name of nationalism.



Sakombi: back in business

Deadly new flu raises fears of epidemic

Robin McKie

AMERICAN scientists flew to Hong Kong last weekend to launch an urgent investigation into a fresh outbreak of a deadly new strain of flu. Two deaths and two other suspected cases have triggered fears that the virus, which originated in chickens, has begun to spread among humans, and could set off a deadly world flu epidemic.

"If these cases have occurred because the strain has started spreading from humans to other humans, the consequences could be very serious indeed," said Sir John Skehel, director of London's National Institute of Medical Research and a world expert on influenza. "People will have no immunity because this is a completely new infectious agent. We could have another pandemic like the one that occurred in 1968." That outbreak killed 700,000.

Researchers had hoped the isolation of an influenza type A virus, known as H5N1, from the body of a Hong Kong boy who died from pneumonia in May would be an isolated case. At the time, Dutch researchers pinpointed the boy's virus as "a pure avian flu" never found in humans before. It is thought the flu came from a chicken kept in his play group.

But last weekend the Hong Kong government reported that a 54-year-old man, who was not identified, had died after apparently being infected with the virus, and a 13-year-old girl, also unidentified, was in hospital. Another new case was also reported last week. Laboratory results have been "sent urgently" to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, in the United States, for confirmation, the statement added, while experts from the centres flew to Hong Kong to investigate.

Meanwhile the Hong Kong government said it had advised the authority that runs the territory's public hospitals to take "appropriate surveillance and prophylactic measures", but did not elaborate.

"There are two types of influenza outbreak," said Sir John. "Normally, we get infected by mutated versions of strains that have already been around for many years. We are already partially immunised against them because we have encountered versions of them before. But occasionally, every few decades, a completely new strain emerges . . . Unfortunately, we are due for another major pandemic any time now."

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Irvine courts disaster in privacy law imbroglio

THE LORD Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, who jokingly compares himself to Cardinal Wolsey and boasts of the wide range of his ministerial responsibilities, was strangely quiet this week as the Government headed towards another glorious British legal muddle over the heated issue of privacy.

Contrary to Lord Irvine's earlier assurances, it now seems that the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the self-regulating body which adjudicates on complaints of media excesses, is a "public authority" in the terms of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which is shortly to be incorporated into British law by means of a Human Rights Bill.

This means that the PCC's decisions can be challenged in the courts and that judges could end up operating a privacy law of their own making, even though the present Government, and its predecessor, have said they preferred to give self-regulation a chance to work. Self-regulation, it seems, will become legal regulation. This posed questions over what role, if any, the PCC is to exercise in the future.

The big guns of some press proprietors were turned on Lord Irvine, demanding that he exempt the media from those articles of the ECHR designed to protect citizens against intrusion. But the media could hardly demand such exemption while, at the same time, enjoying the protection of another article which guarantees freedom of expression.

Lord Irvine seemed to think that, if the PCC toughened up its act, the judges would not meddle unduly with its judgments. But judges have proved to be poor protectors of the press in the past, particularly in the absence of any law relating to freedom of information, a subject on which the Government is also ominously silent.

Britain's defamation laws, among the toughest in the world, are often used by well-heeled litigants to prevent legitimate investigative reporting. Some commentators suggested that the issues of privacy and the libel laws should be tackled together, perhaps in one bill to set out the rights and duties of the media, but there is no sign of that happening either.

EDUCATION action zones are to be set up to produce a dramatic improvement in exam results in some of the most deprived areas of England and Wales. Each zone will include two or three secondary schools and 15 or more primary schools, and will receive a £250,000 grant and matching sponsorship from business to pay for advanced-skill teachers and "super heads" who could attract salaries of more than £100,000.

Under the new School Standards and Framework Bill, partnership "forums" of local authorities, businesses and parents can bid for action-zone status and will be allowed to ignore national agreements on pay and conditions, and shed parts of the national curriculum to concentrate more on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Five zones will be up and running by next April, and another 20 over the following two years.

Under the same legislation, the most sweeping since the Education Act of 1944, local authorities which fail to reach education targets in their schools could be required to hand over their powers to ministers. They could transfer the running of schools to neighbouring local authorities or even to private companies — a move which could lead to the partial privatisation of the education service.

PROTESTERS in Northern Ireland started tearing down some of the transmitter masts erected by the mobile telephone company, Orange, which, because of a legal loophole, needs no planning permission for them in the province.

Because hills cause interference, Orange plans to build no fewer than 400 of the 15-metre masts, which will mean a mast every few miles. Some protesters see them as eyesores, while others fear the radio waves may lead to cancer. But farmers were not displeased. The going rate for a mast site is £75,000, or £6,000 a year for a lease.

THE BUSINESS tycoon, Tiny Rowland, issued writs claiming that Mohamed Al Fayed, owner of the prestigious Harrods store, offered him a £10 million bribe and also tried to blackmail him into lying to a parliamentary select committee.

In this latest chapter in a long-running feud between the two men, Mr Rowland claimed Mr Fayed plundered his safe deposit box at Harrods, offering to return the contents only if he supported Mr Fayed's claim that the former Home Secretary, Michael Howard, had accepted a bribe.

Mr Fayed strongly denied the allegations, and Mr Howard has been cleared by the House of Commons standards and privileges committee of allegations against him by the Harrods proprietor.

THE PRINCE OF WALES came unexpectedly face to face with one of his former classmates from the mid-1950s when he visited the headquarters of The Big Issue, a magazine sold on the streets by the homeless and unemployed.

Clive Harold, a 49-year-old vendor of the magazine, told Prince Charles that he had been in the same class as him for two years at Hill House prep school in Knightsbridge, London. "The prince didn't remember me, of course," he said, "and I only remember him because we both had big ears."

Like the prince, Mr Harold went from Hill House to a good public school, but his career in journalism and his private life later fell apart through drink. When his second marriage failed, "I lost my house and one day I woke up in a shop doorway in the Strand. I had lost everything."

The Big Issue founder, John Bird, said: "The prince told me as he left, 'It just shows you, doesn't it?' Today's meeting illustrates that anyone can find themselves on the streets, no matter what start they had in life."

Aid cash tied to landmine ban

David Hencke

BRITAIN is to take a tough attitude to requests for foreign aid from countries which refuse to sign the worldwide treaty outlawing landmines, the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, announced in Ottawa last week.

The announcement at the signing of the treaty commits £30 million of taxpayers' money to organise clearance operations up to 2001.

Britain's commitment is a further extension of the ethical foreign policy being pursued by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. The policy will be combined with extra help for the poorest countries that sign the treaty so they can destroy stockpiles and clear minefields faster.

The new "carrot and stick" policy comes as 90 countries signed the treaty in memory of Princess Diana's campaign to ban the production and laying of landmines. The four countries that look likely to fall foul of Britain's strict policy are India, Pakistan, China and Turkey.

A Whitehall paper says Britain will actively campaign with outside organisations to shame the countries into signing the ban, including backing the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

An official source said there would also be tough examination of foreign aid requests — which are already aimed mainly at poverty relief — though it remains to be seen if the Government would cut help to the very poorest in these countries.

Other recipients of British aid who did not sign the treaty, notably Afghanistan and Iraq — given £8.3 million and £7.4 million respectively in 1995 — will receive help to clear landmines. But the cash will go to independent organisations or through United Nations relief efforts.

The internal paper discloses that if no extra resources are made available, it will take 1,000 years to remove the hundreds of millions of mines throughout the world. The biggest concentrations are in Egypt, Angola, China, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Cambodia.

The internal paper admits that Britain's aid will be small compared with Canada's: Ottawa is expected to provide a $100 million (£60 million) de-mining fund. But it goes on: "However, partly as a result of the predominance of British institutions involved in de-mining globally, we continue to have a disproportionate influence on international policy.

"Therefore, it is proposed that we devote resources to influencing and shaping both international policy on humanitarian mine clearance, and the development of multilateral capacity."

John Ryle, page 23



Scientists fear radioactive particles are already leaking into the Atlantic PHOTO: MURDO MacLEOD

Dounreay nuclear site 'risks disaster'

John Arlidge

THE Government is facing a £500 million bill to clean up the most dangerous nuclear dump in Britain. More than 1,000 tonnes of nuclear waste — including highly-enriched uranium and plutonium — has been secretly sunk in a 70-metre shaft at the Dounreay nuclear plant on the north coast of Scotland and must be dug out and made safe, nuclear bosses say.

The Atomic Energy Authority has told ministers the clean-up is the only way to prevent an environmental disaster. Cliffs are eroding and the shaft could collapse into the Atlantic, contaminating beaches and fish stocks. The rock is badly fractured and scientists fear radioactive particles are already leaking.

The operation is one of the most hazardous engineering projects ever undertaken. Proper records were not kept and scientists do not know exactly what was dumped in the shaft between 1959 and 1977, when it was closed after an explosion showered radioactive "hot spots" on to local beaches.

What is certain is that it contains more than 50kg of highly enriched uranium, plutonium and sodium products which could explode when moved.

Publicly, the authority says it is "considering its options", but the Guardian has learned that managers have submitted a formal recommendation to the Department of Trade and Industry that the waste should be retrieved, packaged and stored above ground. Ministers are expected to give approval this month.

Dounreay bosses say the operation, which could take up to 30 years, will cost taxpayers "a few hundred million pounds". Industry sources say the bill could rise to £500 million or even £1 billion. Six consortiums are bidding for the contract.

The shaft was dug to remove rock carved out during construction of a low-level waste effluent pipe which runs into the Atlantic. In 1959 managers plugged the bottom and began using it as a waste repository. Over the next 18 years a 700 cubic metre deadly cocktail was dumped. Although the shaft was waterlogged, workers deposited sodium and potassium coolant from the fast-breeder reactors being developed at the plant.

The two elements reacted with the water and generated so much hydrogen that in May 1977 an explosion blew the top off, spewing radioactivity on to the coastline. Hundreds of "hot spots" have been discovered in the area.

In their submission to the DTI, managers say they will freeze the waste by pumping cool brine into the rock around the shaft and "defrost" it metre by metre, allowing robots to lift it to the surface and package it. When the shaft is empty it will be cleaned and filled with concrete.

They admit the unprecedented operation is "challenging", but insist they can remove the waste safely. Roy Nelson, director of Dounreay, said: "It is going to be tricky because it is potentially a chemically unstable situation and we are disturbing it. We will only proceed when we have convinced ourselves that we've got all the techniques that will permit the safe retrieval of the waste. Safety is our top priority."

Robinson denies tax accusations

Dan Atkinson and Michael White

THE Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, has threatened to take legal action against two Sunday newspapers for committing "serious libels" in reports of his complex financial affairs and the trust arrangements created for them.

In a statement which accompanied sharply-worded solicitors' letters to the Sunday Times and Observer, the multi-millionaire businessman also insisted he pays British taxes on the proceeds of the £18 million blind trust he set up when he became a minister last May.

On Monday the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, spoke out on Mr Robinson's behalf, insisting Labour was not operating double standards. "If people of high calibre are to come into the Government and work as former business people, they bring an enormous amount to the way that Government is run," he said.

A statement from the Observer said: "The Observer . . . regrets he did not take the opportunity to respond to our questions about the £3m transaction in the Orion Trust . . . We stand by our story, in which we have not suggested that Mr Robinson has done anything illegal or improper. Rather we have raised questions about the structure of the transactions and whether they were appropriate for a Treasury minister."

The editor of the Sunday Times, John Witherow, issued a statement, saying: "The Sunday Times is pleased that Mr Robinson has confirmed he transferred shares to offshore Bermuda trusts. As we said, these trusts are clearly linked to his wider family.

"We did not say that he continued to hold a beneficial interest in the trusts — merely that this formed a pattern of business dealings and that Mr Robinson should give a complete account of his financial arrangements."

In demanding the papers publish prominent corrections — or face libel actions — Mr Robinson said he had been advised by Whitehall officials that there was no need to include in the blind trust the Guernsey-based Orion Trust, set up for his family by his business patron, Josca Bourgeois, because "I was a discretionary beneficiary" only.

Since Madame Bourgeois, who died in 1994, was a Belgian resident in Switzerland "there was no, nor could there have been, any UK tax avoidance" the statement said. "Moreover, at no time have I transferred capital or other assets into Orion Trust for tax or any other purpose," Mr Robinson added.

It was his toughest attempt yet to shake off Tory and media attacks, which have been renewed since the minister's decision — announced last week — to replace Tessa and Pep saving systems with a new Individual Savings Account (ISA) scheme, whose tax-free element will be capped at £50,000 a head.

Labour MPs are divided over the ISA scheme and over the attacks on wealthy colleagues such as Mr Robinson and European trade minister Lord Simon, the former BP chief. Mr Robinson's UK tax bill is said by allies to be huge. Neither takes a ministerial salary.

Tax and save scheme, page 19

Ministers get tough on beef protests

Guardian Reporters

THE Government on Sunday accused militant farmers protesting against the import of cheap foreign beef of destroying the prospect of additional aid for sections of the beef industry, as police began adopting tougher tactics to counter pickets at several ports.

With ministers increasingly concerned about police inaction in the face of what some regard as illegal picketing, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has been urged to remind chief constables that farmers blockading ports should be treated no differently from trade union pickets.

The Agriculture Minister, Jack Cunningham, said: "The reality is that farmers have been allowed to get away with things they should not have been allowed to get away with. The whole thing is deplorable. Farmers should realise their whole approach is damaging their chances of getting a positive response."

Farmers, angered by the threat to their livelihood from cheap Irish imports, have been staging blockades at ports, initially in Wales but quickly spreading across Britain. Some protesters have threatened to stop all agricultural produce from entering the UK.

Sir David Naish, president of the National Farmers' Union (NFU), which has been rapidly losing control of its membership in some areas, urged farmers to call off their protests. "The dispute is between ourselves and the Government and not with the public, the shops or anybody else," he said.

Farmers in Scotland appeared to heed the call by announcing a suspension of blockades.

In a blunt letter from the European Commission, the British trade minister, Lord Simon, was told British farmers must be brought under control this week or the Government could face legal action in the European Court.

Mario Monti, the Italian internal market commissioner, demanded to know what the Government was doing to restore the free movement of goods, notably cheap Irish beef.

In terms notably stronger than those employed recently by the Commission to the French government over its handling of the French lorry strike, Mr Monti demanded to know by Wednesday this week what action the British authorities intended to take to protect free circulation under European Union treaty obligations.

The crisis, fuelled by more uncertainty over last week's decision to ban the sale of British beef on the bone, has been compounded by the strength of the pound. The NFU claims farm incomes overall will drop by 47 per cent this year.

Under the EU's common agricultural policy, minimum prices for crops and livestock are set in ecus — and as sterling has risen, the value of farm products has fallen. But Mr Cunningham insisted: "Ministers certainly aren't going to negotiate with farmers under duress. They were among the first to protest when British lamb exports were being disrupted in France."



Marrow link brings new bans

A DEVASTATING new disclosure about BSE in British beef last week killed off any lingering hope of an early lifting of the European embargo and dealt a blow to consumer confidence and the domestic market's fragile recovery.

The Government, after evidence that BSE had been detected in bone marrow, was forced to extend its ban to cover T-bone steaks, ribsteaks and oxtails, which account for about 5 per cent of the British market.

Butchers will have to debone the meat before selling it on to restaurants and shops. The Consumers' Association advised people who wanted to avoid all risk to avoid eating meat altogether.

There was initial confusion over the range of products affected by the new bans. For example, the Government said gelatin — a beef product made from beef bones used in a range of foods, from sweets to biscuits and stock cubes — could only be used if it had been "satisfactorily demonstrated it was BSE-free".

The Government said it would announce a wide-ranging inquiry into BSE before Christmas. Relatives of BSE victims welcomed the move.

The disclosure came only two weeks before the European Union was due to discuss a partial lifting of its export ban. Northern Ireland and Scotland, which keep better records of their herds, had been in line for possible exemption from the boycott. That now seems unlikely.

The new ban will hit beef prices and force many farmers out of business. The National Farmers Union described it as "a body blow".

In Brief

DENISE Giddings, a 33-year-old mother of three, was remanded in custody accused of abducting a three-hours-old baby, Karli Hawthorne, from a recovery room in Basildon hospital, Essex. Her application for bail was refused. The Portia Trust, a charity that supports women involved in baby abduction, said the incident could lead to a series of "copycat" child snatches.

BRITISH Airways is to introduce tough new measures to curb drunkenness on its flights to support the safety of passengers and staff. Employees will be empowered to prevent passengers who appear drunk from boarding aircraft, and to confiscate duty-free alcohol from inebriated passengers in flight.

ANDREW Evans, who at the age of 17 falsely confessed to murdering a schoolgirl after being injected with so-called truth drugs, was freed after serving 25 years in jail — the longest period served by a person subsequently found to have been wrongly convicted.

A FIVE-day-old baby, Baebhen Schuttke, became the world's youngest transplant patient after doctors used a pioneering technique to reduce a donor's liver to one eighth its normal size. The baby is now five months old.

BARRY Horne, an animal rights activist, was jailed for 18 years for a firebomb campaign against shops in the Isle of Wight in August 1994. No one was injured but £3 million of damage was said to have been done.

THE British Museum has shelved plans to introduce admission charges and is to turn to internal economies to raise money for its running costs.

THE "Mardi Gra" bomber, who previously mounted an 18-month extortion campaign against Barclays bank, was believed to have struck again when a shopper found an explosive device at a Sainsbury's supermarket in west London.

COUNCIL taxes could rise by up to 10 per cent after the Government relaxed controls on local spending. However, schools will receive an extra £835 million and social services an extra £97 without at breach of Tory spending plans, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, said.

LORD Dainton, scientist, administrator of science and teacher who produced work of international importance on the effects of radiation on materials, has died aged 83.

LORD Wyatt of Weeford, journalist, former Labour MP, former chairman of the Tote, and self-styled Voice of Reason for the rightwing News of the World newspaper, has died aged 79.

Sinn Fein hit by talks split

John Mullin

THE Irish republican movement appeared to be split this week as the sister of the hunger striker Bobby Sands announced she was one of the senior figures involved in a new organisation opposed to aspects of Sinn Fein's peace strategy. It will seek funds in the United States.

The long-threatened move is a blow to the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, and is potentially the most serious division within the movement since Republican Sinn Fein walked out on Sinn Fein in 1986 over its recognition of the 26-county Irish government.

Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, whose brother was the first of 10 hunger strikers to die in 1981 after he fasted for 66 days, was elected vice-chair of the 32-County Sovereignty Committee. It was founded at a weekend rally in Dublin attended by about 150 republicans from throughout Ireland.

Sinn Fein dismissed the group as tiny. It said on Monday that Sinn Fein was stable and solid.

Ms Sands-McKevitt, who runs a printing business in Dundalk, Co Louth, with her partner, Michael McKevitt, said the new group was not opposed to the ceasefire. But it disagreed with the Mitchell principles, to which Sinn Fein subscribes, because they could only lead to a recognition of Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein had to sign up to the six principles to win its place at the negotiating table. They are named after the former US senator, George Mitchell, chairman of the multi-party talks. While they commit parties to exclusively peaceful means, republican critics also point to an in-built Unionist veto.

Ms Sands-McKevitt did not want the new group to be seen as "out to bash Sinn Fein". Because of the rules at the Stormont negotiations, Sinn Fein was in a process which could only lead to an internal settlement.

"What is on offer now is more of less a modernised version of partition, so therefore we feel it is not actually a solution. I would be fearful for future generations. We want to raise the awareness of the public to the situation," she said.

It would be a one-issue party, she said. The aim would be to defend the ideal of the 32-county sovereignty of Ireland.

The organisation wanted to attract "nationalist-minded people from right across the board". She was unable to say if its supporters had previously been members of other parties. She had never been a member of Sinn Fein.

There had been speculation last month she would lead a dissidents' group after up to 20 IRA defections following a crisis meeting of the leadership in Gweedore, Donegal. Up to 12 members of Sinn Fein in Co Louth then quit, also in opposition to the Mitchell principles.

The Sands name carries great weight in republican circles. The family also comes from Belfast, which has so far strongly backed the Adams approach.

● The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, indicated he would press ahead with an historic meeting with Sinn Fein at Downing Street despite the republican party's leaders, Mr Adams and Martin McGuinness, being named in a BBC television programme as members of the IRA's ruling body, the army council.

Downing Street said it had been long aware of the inextricable link between Sinn Fein and IRA, and the meeting would take place as planned on Thursday — the first time a prime minister has received an Irish republican leader at Downing Street since Lloyd George and Michael Collins paved the way for partition in 1921.

Andrew Scott surveys his metal sculpture of a Clydesdale horse which dominates the new Glasgow Business Park. The work was unveiled by the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar PHOTO: MURDO MacLEOD

Corrupt police are 'working the system'

Duncan Campbell

CORRUPT police officers were protected by a disciplinary process that frustrated efforts to remove them, Sir Paul Condon, the commissioner of the Metropolitan police said last week.

He estimated that up to 250 officers had been able to remain in his force by such tactics as mimicking stress and threatening suicide in order to avoid being disciplined.

He told the Commons home affairs select committee inquiry into the police disciplinary and complaints procedures that while he believed the Met was the most honest big city force in the world and most of his officers were professional and brave, a minority "commit crimes, neutralise evidence in important cases and betray police operations and techniques to criminals".

Because of those officers' training, they were difficult to target and prosecute.

Since the 1970s when the former commissioner, Sir Robert Mark, had been able to get rid of 478 officers who feared disciplinary or criminal proceedings, "the pendulum has swung heavily in favour of bad officers. I am faced with a disciplinary system which actually has as many hurdles if not more to clear than convicting an officer in a criminal court."

It had taken three years and 10 months to discipline one officer who had been caught on video extorting money and sexual favours from a prostitute.

He called for the power of instant dismissal for gross misconduct; the right to demand an explanation or to draw an inference when officers refused to answer questions; the burden of proof in discipline cases to be the same as in civil rather than a criminal proceedings; the removal of the "double jeopardy" rule so that an officer who had been acquitted in a criminal trial could still face disciplinary proceedings; and the restriction of legal representation to the appeal process.

● Detective Superintendent Ray Mallon, of Cleveland police, suspended last week in connection with a corruption inquiry, is to challenge his suspension in the High Court. He is also protesting about being "gagged" following instructions that he should not continue writing his regular column for a regional paper.

Best-known as a proponent of "zero tolerance" policing, Mr Mallon is under investigation by the Police Complaints Authority following an inquiry into whether two Middlesbrough officers had offered heroin to men arrested on burglary charges in exchange for information or confessions. It was alleged that Mr Mallon may have passed on information related to the inquiry to the media.

Government took war victims' cash

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE post-war Labour government seized frozen wartime bank accounts belonging to Holocaust victims as payment for debts it was owed by countries occupied by the Nazis, according to an unpublished Whitehall report drawn up by the Department of Trade.

It reveals that the government at the time told banks to hand over the money to the Treasury instead of returning it to the individuals from whom it had been taken.

Completed last month, the report has been kept under wraps to avoid embarrassment during last week's London conference on Nazi gold. Whitehall officials say ministers want "to study it and come out with policy decisions".

The Government could be liable to pay compensation of up to £70 million for the handling of the issue at the time, an authoritative source said last week.

The report was drawn up after pressure from the Holocaust Education Trust, which disclosed in September that British banks were holding millions of pounds in dormant accounts belonging to people persecuted by the Nazis. The trust revealed that the government paid some of the money to British companies to compensate them for wartime trading losses or to newly liberated countries not indebted to Britain.

What the trust did not discover was that some bank accounts were confiscated in lieu of payment for governments in debt to Britain. Lord Janner, chairman of the trust, was told by Margaret Beckett, Trade and Industry Secretary, last month that the Government could make no promises about whether it would compensate Holocaust survivors whose accounts were seized.

Britain was also under pressure last week to publish archives which Jewish organisations say show the Allies knowingly used 55 tonnes of gold — worth about £400 million today — stolen from individuals to replenish European central banks after the war, an act described as "morally and financially wrong," by Lord Janner last week.

Hotline to ease hospital logjams

Michael White

THE National Health Service is to set up a network of 24-hour telephone hotlines staffed by nurses able to give practical advice to callers who cannot see their doctor or visit the accident and emergency department of their local hospital.

The scheme, to be known as NHS Direct, is adapted from experience in the private health care system and the United States — where it has produced sharp cuts in doctors' home visits and in hospital bed occupancy.

"If a child has a temperature or is feeling unwell or if someone has fallen over and doesn't want to bother their doctor, they can ring in. If it transpires they need an ambulance or a doctor, nurse or social service visit that can be done," a minister said last week.

Three pilot schemes are to start in March. If successful they will lead to a network throughout England and Wales by 2000, preferably all using the same telephone number at the cost of a local call.

The estimated cost of the scheme is approximately "£1 per head, per population covered" — or £50 million a year. It will be met from efficiency savings now being sought in NHS budgets.

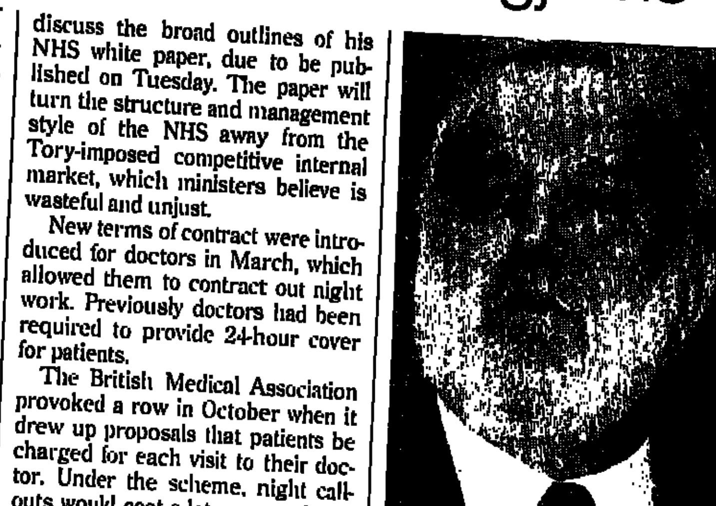
The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, hinted at the scheme when he appeared on BBC television to discuss the broad outlines of his NHS white paper, due to be published on Tuesday. The paper will turn the structure and management style of the NHS away from the Tory-imposed competitive internal market, which ministers believe is wasteful and unjust.

New terms of contract were introduced for doctors in March, which allowed them to contract out night work. Previously doctors had been required to provide 24-hour cover for patients.

The British Medical Association provoked a row in October when it drew up proposals that patients be charged for each visit to their doctor. Under the scheme, night call-outs would cost a lot more and fees would be charged for medical tests. Hospital patients would have to pay for their beds and food.

The BMA chairman, Sandy Macara, said at the time: "We do not like the idea of charging patients and I cannot believe we will change our policy, but we may be forced to do so."

NHS Direct is part of Mr Dobson's drive to make the health service more efficient and responsive to modern patient needs. The influential NHS Confederation, which represents trust and board managers, has long advocated such a scheme, staffed by full-time nurses, working from computerised advice sheets as happens in some hospital accident and emergency units.



Frank Dobson: cost of scheme must be met by efficiency savings

The Royal College of Nursing welcomed the NHS Direct proposal. A spokesperson said: "This is a good idea if it is well resourced and has well-trained nurses on it. It will be very useful for mothers with young children. It should take some of the pressure off accident and emergency departments, diverting people who are worried and just want advice."

● Mr Dobson promised reform of the system of paying for long-term care of elderly people before the next general election when he announced a royal commission on the issue last week.

Oxbridge colleges to lose special subsidy

Donald MacLeod and John Carvel

OXFORD and Cambridge colleges are expected to lose the special fees they receive direct from the Government under a radical settlement being thrashed out with ministers.

The deal will precipitate far-reaching changes to the colleges, which have jealously guarded their autonomy for centuries, but intense lobbying by the ancient universities appears to have softened the immediate financial threat. Money to be paid through grants to the university authorities from next year will initially come close to matching the £35 million extra Oxford and Cambridge receive in college fees but is expected to fall over the next five years.

The proposed new grants will include allowances for the upkeep of historic buildings as well as rewards for high standards of research and teaching. Residence charges to students will have to rise as the college fee is phased out.

Cambridge colleges are particularly concerned about a possible loss of autonomy if grants come directly through the university. "Our main concern is that the colleges are very keen on preserving their independence," said George Reid, bursar of St John's, who chairs the bursars' committee.

Taxpayers' subsidies to Oxbridge colleges — some of which are extremely wealthy — were an obvious target for Labour ministers at a time when the university sector was in serious financial difficulties.

Ministers are determined not to allow Oxbridge colleges to charge top-up fees, so the deal will have to give the two universities enough money in the short term to prevent a serious rebellion in the House of Lords during the higher education bill.

The Rector of Lincoln College, Eric Anderson, appealed recently for funds to sustain the tutorial system of individual or small group teaching. "If the college fee paid by the Government direct to colleges is abolished or greatly reduced, as seems almost certain, our financial problems will be greatly exacerbated," he said.

Supporters of the two universities have fought to preserve the college system, which they say benefits research as well as teaching. Lord Jenkins, Chancellor of Oxford, said that to degrade the status of Oxbridge would be a "perverse act of national self-mutilation".

Boost for pit jobs as work halted on gas power plants

Celia Weston and Michael White

TONY BLAIR last week signalled a U-turn on help for the coal industry and the saving of thousands of miners' jobs when he announced a government moratorium on building gas-fired power stations.

The abrupt block on the "dash for gas" — in which power generators have opted to cut contracts for coal in favour of gas — is seen by the Cabinet as the first stage in a revamped national energy policy.

The decision to refuse permission for the development of more gas-fired plants came as MPs and miners protested at the prospective loss of 5,000 jobs in the privatised deep-mine coal industry.

However, electricity generators warned that up to twice as many jobs could be lost as a result of the decision.

David Porter, chief executive of the Association of Electricity Producers, said: "The Government's decision will do nothing to help the coal industry. Instead it will deprive thousands of people work in power station construction."

The Prime Minister's curb on the "dash for gas" may not have an immediate impact on the coal industry crisis but coal industry sources said that at least it provided a breathing space and, with other measures, could well save many pits and jobs.

It was welcomed by coal campaigners and MPs as a belated first step towards overhauling the flawed "free market" in energy inherited from the Tories — who, led by former market forces guru, John Redwood, had demanded government intervention in their own about-face.

Some senior ministers, notably Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, urged Mr Blair to act after showing impatience with the slow progress made by Margaret Beckett's team at the Department of Trade and Industry.

"We want to preserve as much of the deep-mined coal industry as we possibly can," Mr Blair told MPs.

Downing Street stepped in amid increasing Whitehall concern about RJB Mining group, the country's largest coal producer which owns the threatened pits and has been demanding financial subsidies.

RJB's chief executive, Richard Budge, who was accused of brinkmanship to force the Government to support his company, backed off his apocalyptic predictions of closure announcements before Christmas.

He told MPs that, if he could secure contracts for an additional 14 million tonnes in 1998-99 he would be able to maintain production in all his pits.

Mr Redwood, now Mrs Beckett's Conservative shadow, called the move — including a review of the security of fuel supplies and diversity — "too little, too late".

Labour's U-turn came after the Energy Minister, John Battle, received a letter from the Grid's chief executive, David Jones, raising concerns about the diversity of fuel supply.

Mr Jones warned ministers that "on present trends it is certainly possible that the fuel mix early in the next century could consist of only gas, nuclear and imports from France and Scotland".

Reliance on one fuel source "makes the electricity system vulnerable to interruptions in supply", he added.

Comment, page 12

Fuelling the coal debate

THE best contribution the Government can make to Britain's collapsing coal industry is to plan for the future of the energy market as a whole. It is a bit rich expecting this parsimonious Labour administration to use taxpayers' money to bail out the privatised coal industry from a slide towards oblivion as electricity generators discard coal in favour of natural gas. Coal is no longer the employment problem it once was. The 5,000 jobs currently at risk are a fresh tragedy for the communities involved but small compared with the other 730,000 who have lost their jobs since a former Labour government nationalised the pits in 1947. Since then it has been a question of controlling the rhythm of decline — a job done sympathetically under successive Labour and Tory governments and then brutally under Margaret Thatcher, who had political scores to settle.

What should an environmentally friendly energy policy look like in a deregulated world? A privatised coal industry cannot realistically expect handouts. What it can demand is a level playing field. At the moment the market is rigged against coal. The electricity generators (themselves in a monopolistic situation worthy of further inquiry) take their first supplies from the nuclear industry (which cannot shut down reactors overnight), then from the overseas link to France and from gas fired-stations (many of them in-house) whose contracts are negotiated on a take-or-pay basis, which prompts power stations to take gas even when coal might be cheaper. Not surprisingly coal has become the fuel of last resort even though the burning of a premium fuel such as natural gas is environmentally questionable. It is also strategically unwise since it could leave gas supplies in decades ahead at the mercy of the Taliban in Afghanistan or whoever happens by then to be in charge of Russia's former empire.

British coal is also forced to compete with heavily subsidised coal from Germany and Spain or from places such as Australia, where open-cast operations have taken their own environmental toll. The price of coal, like steel, has also been adversely affected by the Government's foolish strong pound policy, which makes commodity items much more expensive in world markets.

The second object of policy should be to encourage sources of fuel that are friendly to the environment. This means a massive switch of emphasis to renewable sources of energy such as wind, wave and, above all, the sun, possibly financed by a continuance of the fossil fuel levy in another form. The worst enemy of solar energy — which is bound to become increasingly important in the coming century — has been underfunding. If it had benefited from 10 per cent of the funds poured into nuclear research it might by now be nearer the breakthrough into the mass market vital to bring unit costs down. Coal could be part of the move to cleaner fuels. It will never be as clean as solar alternatives, but clean coal technologies could reduce noxious emissions to the level of a minor irritant for the Government's ambitious plans to reduce CO_2 emissions by 20 per cent by 2010.

The third policy objective is strategic — to make sure Britain is not over-dependent on unstable countries once the limited supplies of oil and gas in the North Sea run down. In this context exploitation of the UK's vast supplies of coal in an environmentally friendly way ought to be a priority. It isn't easy to make policy in a deregulated world. But a combination of government-assisted research in key areas plus intelligent use of regulatory powers could lead to a policy which at least looks beyond the short-term profits of the privatised electricity companies.

Tragedy of strength turned to weakness

Martin Woollacott

WHEN Winnie Mandela was in prison in 1969 she kept up her spirits by conducting imaginary conversations with her two young daughters and took comfort from the company of ants and flies, while waiting for "the inevitable hell — interrogation". She wrote that "it is meant to change you into a docile being from whom no resistance can arise".

But Mrs Mandela never ceased resisting. She confounded those set to harass her. She threw confected charges back in the faces of her accusers. She defied policemen, bureaucrats and lawyers, and often succeeded in making them look like fools. She would not be browbeaten, she would not be cowed, she would not concede, she would not deal, she would not compromise. And last week, in Johannesburg, she was all those things again, in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. How to express the sadness of this situation, that what once were virtues and strengths have become vices and weaknesses, that what once was magnificent is now terrible, that what once was beautiful is now ugly? How to comprehend the complicated and terrible links that connect the ruined life of this woman with the ruined lives of others? And how to weigh in the balance the respective significance of flaws of personality that in another time or place might never have grown to malignant proportions with the pressures of a system that always set out to corrupt those it could not destroy in other ways?

South Africans in their millions have watched these hearings, in which Mrs Mandela repudiated a mass of evidence implicating her in actions that led to the deaths of at least a dozen people, some of them township boys and young men, others dedicated professionals in the struggle against apartheid. She dismissed all the evidence as rubbish and implied that an extraordinary conspiracy between the old and the new regimes has made of her a target, just as she was a target long ago, as soon as her new husband was sent off to Robben Island. Pressed hard by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, she did, at the last minute, make a sort of admission, not of her own guilt, but at least of the fact that terrible events did take place. "Things went horribly wrong."

The trouble is that they may still be going horribly wrong, and that the tragedy of one individual, whose faults were magnified by circumstances and by an evil regime, could become a tragedy for a whole nation. Unless legal action deflects her, Mrs Mandela will later this month stand for election as deputy leader of the ANC. Whether or not she succeeds in that, she might go on in time to challenge Nelson Mandela's successor as president, Thabo Mbeki. The quality of popular appeal he lacks, Mrs Mandela, in spite of everything, still possesses in abundance. Even if this extreme view of her political possibilities is never realised, and most people do not think it will be, at least her continued presence on the South African political scene must deepen the polarisation which is already a characteristic of that scene. That will make rational policy-making harder, social explosions more likely, white flight and capital flight more of a danger, law and order more of a problem, and democracy more difficult to maintain.



Winnie Mandela: tears shed at the truth commission hearing PHOTO: ADIL BRADLOW

Above all, it will stand in the way of what Alex Boraine, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has called an objective as important as the achievement of social and economic justice, the "restoration of the moral order". That is the purpose of the commission, to begin the process of mentally drawing South Africans out of an era in which few, including many of those who opposed it, entirely escaped the moral distortions of apartheid. To take only the most obvious example, the concept of truth is undermined in a society where for decades on end systematic misrepresentation and disinformation have reigned. The idea of a fair record is inevitably damaged. This is precisely what makes it possible for Mrs Mandela to propose something as ludicrous as a many-headed conspiracy to destroy her. For in the past there *were* conspiracies, there was lying on a massive scale, and things usually *were* far different from what they seemed to be.

But, it can be argued, South Africa has changed. Yet for many ordinary black South Africans, it has not changed enough. They still feel excluded, they still feel they have little power over their own lives, they still feel mystified by the language of government, a language which, when decoded, often seems to mean the same as in the apartheid past, namely that they are not going to get many, or even any, of the things they want. Mrs Mandela's appeal is that she has carried over into the new South Africa the defiance that challenged the old South Africa. Her sweeping repudiation of all the accusations against her is of a piece with her diatribes on crime, land, and jobs, and her call for capital punishment.

It is a position of no compromise, and such a position must have a great attraction for the powerless and the disappointed once the novelty of black faces at the top of society has passed. The ANC is over-cautious in the face of this phenomenon. It is dismaying that the movement's leadership has never faced the problem of Mrs Mandela directly. One of the reasons for the narrowness of this confrontation may be that when she did enjoy influence and power after her husband's release, she used it to block the paths of a number of upright ANC figures, particularly those who had tried to curb her activities in the late 1980s.

It can even be argued that her influence could have tipped the balance against Cyril Ramaphosa, one of that group, and in favour of Mr Mbeki when the latter was anointed successor to Mr Mandela. The Mandela United Football Club is gone, but they may have helped determine who is to be South Africa's president into the next century. They may determine much else. Whether Mrs Mandela will be a powerful figure in that same future, or not much more than a nuisance, is unclear.

Mary Benson recalls in her autobiography discussing South Africa with James Baldwin in 1964. "The truth about the past is really all we have to guide us in the present," the American writer presciently remarked. But as long as popular feeling can cohere around a huge falsity about what happened in the Mandela United Football Club years, South Africa cannot enter fully into its inheritance.

A downpayment on The People's Princess™

Mark Lawson

WHEN the Princess of Wales died, there was much agonising over whether she should have the letters HRH before her name. This month, the alphabetical agenda shifted to the question of whether she should have the letters ™ (trademark) after it. Lawyers for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Committee began moves to patent the most-photographed features in history. Permission would then be needed for reproduction of Diana's face for commercial purposes. Those old expressions about losing face and saving face took on a new meaning. As, indeed, did the one about clearing your name. Protection is also being sought for the words "Diana, Princess of Wales". You may indeed have to clear her name before you use it.

The view that this was merely legal throat-clearing disappeared when the Diana legal team sent a letter to LIVE TV, the Mirror Group's television channel, warning against a planned dramatisation of her life. In response to all of this, one can only say: Jesus! And say it quickly, before the Vatican lawyers manage to get a licence on that one. Admittedly, you can understand the committee's twitchiness. Reports last week that intruders had been apprehended close to Diana's burial site in Northamptonshire underlined the scale of the cult that is building around her and the ghoulishness that it may involve. And, last Sunday, the media's promises over the privacy of the princess's sons were broken for the first time. These worrying developments do not, however, justify the seeking of protection almost unprecedented for a non-fictional character.

The lawyers murmur that legitimate news reporting of the princess's life will not be affected. But, in years to come, print and visual news operations will make much money out of the princess from anniversary supplements, 1990s retrospectives, state-of-royalty specials. Why is this commercial exploitation of her memory better than LIVE TV's drama or the kind of "tacky" memorabilia which the committee claims to be targeting?

In all other previous cases, the image and reputation of the celebrity dead has been at the mercy of the market. Churchill, JFK and Presley have all been exploited in a range of products stretching from the hagiographic to the hostile, high art and low. Tragedy and rank do not earn Diana the right to a different kind of afterlife.

The Memorial Committee is already moonlighting as a patent office and a Press Complaints Commission. There are, it is true, precedents. Disney is famously strict on where the face of Mickey Mouse appears. And the estates of many famous writers have sought ways of extending their copyright on the works beyond the period set down in law. Yet these are not appetising parallels for the self-declared protectors of Diana. The motives of Disney and of literary families in such cases are well understood to be brutally commercial. In seeking to patent the princess, the Memorial Committee coldly declares her a commodity: Diana, Princess of Sales. It also sits uneasily with the government-led rhetoric about The People's Princess.

Talk of maximising charitable profits and securing the future of the young princes does not excuse the sinister aspects of this business. Even those who supported some kind of privacy code never imagined that protection would be extended to the dead. If the late princess's lawyers get a whiff of support from the courts, living celebrities will be rushing to bring similar head cases. Soon businessmen who would rather not have their faces in the papers and each celebrity who disliked being seen without a fee would be briefing QCs.

This prospect is so frightening that the draconian behaviour of the princess's lawyers last week will achieve far more than the tabloids' tactical rubbishing of her brother, Earl Spencer, in weakening the case against privacy protection. The Memorial Committee might consider the irony that — if it carries on like this — one of Diana's legacies will be the continuation of a media open-season on the famous.

One of the cards outside Kensington Palace after Diana's death read: "Born a lady, lived a princess, died a saint." This sentimental summary must now be followed by a very late 20th century addendum: ". . . but lived on as The People's Princess™ (all rights reserved)."

Netanyahu mounts a diplomatic offensive

COMMENT
Patrice Claude

TWO weeks after meeting the British prime minister, Tony Blair, in London, the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu — who recently sent his diplomats scurrying to the United States, Egypt, Jordan and Russia — has made another effort to get international approval for what must be called a whole new definition of the Oslo peace agreement reached with the Palestinians in December 1993.

Spurned by President Bill Clinton, who refused to see him until he had something "credible" to propose to revive a peace process substantially damaged by his hard-nosed attitude, Netanyahu is attempting to drive a wedge between the US and its Western allies. Counting on the declared ambition of all the parties concerned to play a "significant role" in the Middle East, he is trying to encourage the international diplomatic competition that he hopes will strengthen his hand in talks with Washington.

The surprising attention paid to France's foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, when he went to Jerusalem last week, is part of that strategy. Vedrine, who in September branded Netanyahu's policy as "disastrous", could have expected to be at the receiving end of at least a few diplomatic tomatoes. Not so long ago other French ministers, though known to be more deferential to Israel, were subjected to much worse treatment for saying much less. Yet the Israeli foreign minister, David Levy, and the others whom Vedrine met showered him with smiles and compliments with the result that the French minister and some members of his team came away "favourably impressed" by "a willingness to explain and convince".

Reviled daily by the local press and political community for endangering Israel's relations with an ally that has been arming and financing it to the tune of $3 billion a year for more than 25 years, Netanyahu is aware of the excellent personal relations that Vedrine has with the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and would not be averse to Paris interceding on his behalf with Washington. The present diplomatic offensive is therefore aimed primarily at convincing Europeans and Arabs that his new "peace initiative" — a vague promise to withdraw from the West Bank — is quite sound.

Everyone in the region knows that the moment the US and Europe, not to mention Egypt and Jordan, are convinced that Israel's new approach is "fair", Yasser Arafat — who still hasn't managed to cobble together a democratic regime worthy of international respect in the autonomous enclaves whose survival depends largely on Western aid — will have no choice but to accept it. However, things haven't quite reached that point yet.

On the advice of Albright, who telephoned him earlier this week, the PLO leader, weakened, depressed, ailing and increasingly under attack, took care to allow his aides to reject the latest Israeli approach and let it be known he would say nothing until he received a proposal on the withdrawal from the Occupied Territories that was precise and "in keeping with the agreement made".

Having first gone back on the Israeli undertaking that the Labour government gave in Oslo, Netanyahu is now trimming his own promise to make "three military redeployments in the West Bank before mid-1998". He is now offering to make only one redeployment, and even that subject to several conditions, which the PLO has ruled "unacceptable". The first condition — it being understood, of course, that Israel alone will judge the result — is that Arafat once again undertakes to "mount an intensive struggle against terrorist infrastructures" in the autonomous enclaves. The second is that he agrees to "forget" the other two promised withdrawals from the occupied territories. The third is that Arafat agrees to enter into immediate negotiations on the final status of all the occupied territories, that of the Jewish settlements and the 3,000,000 refugees living outside Palestine.



Police stand guard in Jerusalem's Muslim quarter during a recent visit by Mr Netanyahu PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRE DURAND

Israel's position on the last two points is known: there is no question of accepting dual sovereignty over Jerusalem or of allowing Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in what is now Israeli territory and in the occupied West Bank. What is not known are Israel's intentions on the final status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Labour sources say that if it had been in office until the end of its mandate, the Oslo peace agreement could have resulted in a Palestinian state covering 90 per cent of the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. But the national-religious coalition currently in power has less generous intentions. This week Netanyahu set up a sort of limited "super-cabinet", consisting of the defence minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, the foreign minister, Levy, and the infrastructures minister, Ariel Sharon, to determine what he called the "red lines" demarcating Israel in the Occupied Territories.

In short, this means that Israel appears to be preparing to tell the Palestinians what territories it would finally agree to return on the West Bank, knowing that the government does not want to hear of a "sovereign state". It is an important matter, as several ministers have made known they would not vote in favour of redeployment from the Occupied Territories until they have a precise idea of what areas Israel plans to retain.

Reports in the Israeli press say that Mordechai, backed by Levy, is proposing to hold on to 54 per cent of the West Bank and 62 per cent of the Gaza Strip. No one can say what "concessions" Sharon has proposed, but he is known to favour annexation of broad strips of land in the eastern and western parts of the West Bank, which would reduce the "Palestinian entity" to half its present size.

(December 5)

Mayoral role in dissolving marriages

EDITORIAL

NOT SO long ago the idea appeared to be preposterous, but it is gaining ground today. Why not let mayors divorce couples prepared to part amicably, in the same way as they perform marriages? The proposal, from the justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, who is anxious to bring the law into line with the social realities of the day and relieve the pressure on overworked courts, brought immediate howls of protest from members of the legal profession ever jealous of their prerogatives. But it is now being more coolly examined in view of the current state of affairs.

The fact is that everything appears to favour taking divorce out of the law courts. Twenty-six years after the 1975 Act laid down three grounds for divorce — mutual consent, misconduct and breakdown of marriage — the number of divorces has been increasing steadily: 120,000 in 1995, half of them by mutual consent. Legal services have since been staggering under a huge workload. Judges play a valuable part in divorce proceedings when they have to adjudicate in disputes arising out of misconduct or the breakdown of marriage, but their role has lost all symbolic significance in dissolutions by mutual consent.

We should heed the grievances of family affairs judges who are exasperated at having to pronounce routine divorces, because it prevents them from closely examining disputes bristling with far greater difficulties. The work of the judge, who is expected to ascertain that the two parties are on an equal footing, that consent is really mutual and the children's rights are safeguarded, is often limited to ratifying an agreement that the couple have reached after long and careful thought. Giving the mayor the responsibility for undoing what he may have already helped to bring together would free judges to do their work of settling contentious issues, such as parentage and child custody disputes.

Even so, any future civil divorce will have to include sufficient safeguards. Here, solutions have to be invented from scratch, whether they involve establishing a genuine system for informing litigants of their rights and obligations, making it obligatory for a couple to appear several times before the mayor before divorce is granted, or obtaining the services of a lawyer or legal adviser. Above all, civil divorce would be acceptable only if the parties are able to challenge the agreement reached by taking it to court.

Apart from helping to make substantial reductions in the number of cases reaching civil courts, which are threatened with paralysis, the proposal would legalise what thousands of couples are already doing.

(December 3)

Divisions still run deep in Bosnia

Daniel Vernet in Sarajevo

THERE could be several reasons why the French and German foreign ministers have decided to go to Sarajevo: it is a demonstration that Paris and Bonn see eye-to-eye on the Bosnian question; or a gesture signalling that simultaneous pressure by both countries could help to further the cause of a united Bosnia.

On the first point, the day (December 4) that Hubert Vedrine and Klaus Kinkel spent in the Bosnian capital was a success. After the deep divisions between the two countries that marked the start of the war in the former Yugoslavia, France and Germany are now demonstrating a "real coherence", as Vedrine pointed out.

The ministers made a number of symbolic gestures: they visited the Franco-German brigade stationed in a Sarajevo suburb, placed wreaths on the graves of French and German soldiers fallen while performing peacekeeping tasks, and gave a joint news conference.

They met the three members of Bosnia's collegiate presidency — Kresimir Zubak (Croat), Momcilo Krajisnik (Serb) and Alija Izetbegovic (Bosnian) — one by one and all together. They told them that the international military presence would continue in Bosnia after June 1988 when the mandate of the present S-For ends, and they gave them a message: in the long term, the new force, consisting of Europeans, Americans and Russians, would not be a substitute for the three communities' willingness to implement the Dayton accords' civil clauses.

The ministers noted that on this point very little progress had been achieved. Kinkel criticised the many obstacles that are holding up the creation of common institutions and warned that they should be removed before the meeting of donor countries due to take place in Bonn next week.

Problems are holding up the introduction of a common currency, a flag, passports, vehicle registration plates and the internal regulations of the council of ministers. And Kinkel reminded them of the commitments made under the Dayton peace accords to facilitate the return of displaced persons — a particularly sensitive issue in Germany, where there are 300,000 Bosnian refugees.

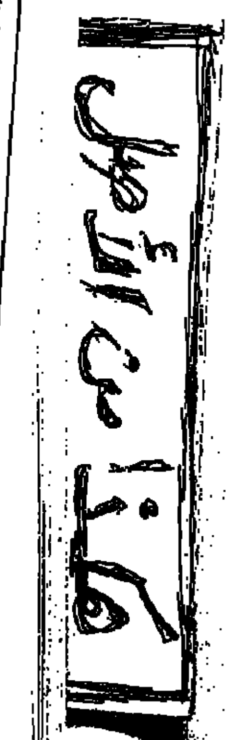
The foreign ministers' message was clear, but was it clearly understood?

The Bonn conference is expected to upgrade the role of the high representative, Carlos Westendorp who, according to Kinkel, might have to impose decisions if the Bosnian presidency keeps falling down on its job. The visiting ministers noted that the leaders of the three communities, all nationalists given legitimacy by the ballot box, lack the will to live together.

The German foreign minister did not mince his words. He told one man who recounted the story of a train that could not run because the three governments could not agree on the coat-of-arms on the locomotive: "That shows how crazy people have become in this part of the world. You'll have to a find a solution on your own. We can't do anything for you there."

He was just as direct on the subject of war criminals, suggesting to the Serb representative that he buy Radovan Karadzic a ticket so that he could go give himself up to the international court in The Hague. Vedrine was more moderate. He declared, without once mentioning the former Serbian leader's name, that all the war criminals would have to go on trial. But for Paris, French sources pointed out, Karadzic was not a problem.

(December 6)



Hats off to M Marceau

Michel Braudeau

MARCEL MARCEAU'S two new productions, which are alternating at the Espace Cardin in Paris until January 11, are both absolute musts. The first, a one-man show called Pantomimes de Style, Pantomimes de Bip, is made up of several of his now classical mime sketches. The other, Le Chapeau Melon, ou l'Odyssée de Jonathan Bowler, is a new "mimodrama" in which he is joined by 12 student mimes who belong to his recently formed company.

The first show is quintessential Marceau, radiating a kind of inexplicable verve that is a pleasure to rediscover. In The Painter, Marceau sets up his easel, mixes his colours and paints a rather chaotic picture.

In Le Petit Café, he plays all the characters in turn, from an obsequious waiter and a roguish cook to a customer, a billiard player and a dancer. In The Court, Marceau plays all the characters: the pompous usher, the judges, the prosecutor and the defence counsel who clash spectacularly, the witness who describes the murder, and finally the accused, who is sentenced to death.

Bip the Tamer celebrates the 50th anniversary of the character Bip, whom Marceau created in 1947: a latter-day Pierrot, wearing white clothes, white makeup and a shapeless hat, he tries to get a recalcitrant beast to leap through a hoop.

Marceau's greatest moment comes with two *tours-de-force:* The Marriage Agency, where Bip faces a host of female candidates, including a giantess; and The Mask Seller, who alternately tries on the masks of laughter and sorrow, and is suddenly unable to remove the mask of laughter even though he is in despair.

Le Chapeau Melon is very different. Marceau plays Jonathan Bowler, a City of London pen-pusher who is forced to wear starched collars and a bowler hat. He falls in love with a barmaid, but his feelings are not reciprocated. To win her over he decides to buy an irresistible Rudolf Valentino-style hat he has seen in a hat shop.

But an unexpected problem crops up: he cannot remove his bowler hat, which loves its master and remains obstinately jammed on his head. Jonathan can no longer pay his respects to people in the street or doff his hat in the presence of the dead. The hat grows enormous, filling the sky like some phantom out of Kafka or Magritte.

This very ambitious 90-minute mimodrama is performed energetically by Marceau and his students. But it raises questions about the limitations of the genre. When the music is good, as it is here, it is hard to see what there is to stop the show from taking off into musical comedy, ballet or spoken comedy except a determination to keep to the rule of muteness.

Bip moved me and made me laugh more profoundly than Bowler. But whichever character one prefers, hats off anyway to Monsieur Marceau!

(November 26)



Admiration! by Olympe Aguado (c.1860) MUSEUM OF STRASBOURG

A gentleman photographer

Michel Guerrin

COUNT Olympe and Viscount Onésipe Aguado were two very unusual brothers. They were wealthy aristocrats and owned one of the most prestigious Bordeaux wine estates, Château Margaux. They were also, in their spare time, amateur photographers.

Olympe (1827-1894) was the more serious of the two, and more committed to the still fledgling medium. He left 200 known pictures. Onésipe (1830-1893) was the funnier — a "gay dog" who went by the nickname of "Zizi". Only eight of the pictures he took during his 10 years of active photography have survived.

Most are seascapes, but they include a famous photograph that features on the cover of the catalogue of the Gilman Collection in New York (the richest photographic collection in the world): it is the portrait of a woman seen from behind, with her right shoulder almost bare.

Why did he photograph her from behind? Perhaps to show off her remarkable hairstyle, but more probably to mask a very plain face, which is revealed in another portrait that shows her in profile.

Although the brothers were recognised and appreciated during their lifetime, and won awards and medals in France and abroad, they have since fallen into oblivion. The show currently on at the Palais Rohan in Strasbourg — a city that owns a fine set of pictures by Olympe Aguado — therefore comes as a revelation.

The exhibition catalogue, the first monograph devoted to Olympe Aguado, contains commentaries on all his known photographs and makes compelling reading. Although some important pictures are not on show, the exhibition includes a fine set of 80 prints from a variety of sources.

The Aguados were certainly amateurs, but were they dilettantes? Certainly not in the case of Olympe, a "gentleman photographer" who did a lot of experimenting, improved the daguerrotype process, devised new enlargement techniques and was one of the inventors of the photographic "visiting card". He also played an official role by founding the Heliographical Society, which changed its name in 1854 to the French Photography Society — and is still thriving today.

The exhibition, which is thematically organised, shows that although Olympe Aguado did not get official commissions like Gustave Le Gray, Edouard-Denis Baldus or Henri Le Secq, he tried his hand at many genres. He produced landscapes, views of trees and animals, genre scenes, and portraits of friends, actors and guests at the Imperial Court in Compiègne.

Particularly remarkable is his Carmen Aguado Holding An Embroidered Alphabet (c.1860), a melancholy, almost Balthus-like portrait of a strangely beautiful teenage girl with very pale, almond-shaped eyes.

All these pictures earned him plaudits from his peers. But he also turned out "private" photographs that were reserved for close friends and family, and which, as Hélène Bocard points out in her catalogue, he did not exhibit, and probably did not sell either. The fact that he was accountable to no one but himself left Olympe Aguado free to devise an extraordinary series of *tableaux vivants* in about 1860.

These were more than a curiosity. They marked the invention of a genre, an allegorical or narrative *mise-en-scène* — a device convincingly adopted by many modern artists such as Jeff Wall, who goes one step further by introducing an element of mise-en-scène into a public space in order to say something about our daily lives.

Aguado's tableaux vivants are very carefully composed pictures of members of his family, including himself, re-enacting everyday domestic situations and events. Witty pictures such as Reading Aloud, A Game Of Solitaire, Teatime, The Game Of Cards and The Photographic Album poke light-hearted fun at the leisured classes under the Second Empire.

What Aguado achieves is a mixture of reportage and mise-en-scène. By capturing expressions, gestures, attitudes and gazes for a fleeting moment, he ushers the spectator into a private world.

The most enigmatic of these tableaux vivants is called Admiration! It shows five people, with their backs to the camera, peering at a painted portrait. It is an audacious viewpoint, containing an image within an image, which neatly questions and contrasts the respective definitions of photography and painting. Here again, one is irresistibly reminded of Jeff Wall.

Olympe Aguado Photographe, Palais Rohan, Strasbourg. Closed on Tuesday. Until January 4.

(November 2-3)

General view of events

Gérard Courtois

C'Etait De Gaulle (vol. 2)
by Alain Peyrefitte
Editions de Fallois/Fayard
654pp 150 francs

IN THIS second volume of his memoirs of Charles de Gaulle, Alain Peyrefitte picks up the story at the beginning of 1963, by which time the general has carried out his reform of France's institutions and secured peace in Algeria.

It begins with a scene in the presidential office on January 4, when De Gaulle announced plans of global dimensions: "After having granted independence to our colonies, we shall obtain our own. Western Europe has become, without even realising it, a protectorate of the Americans. We shall rid ourselves of their domination."

This second volume is no less vivid or acute than the first in the way it sets out to show both the public and the private De Gaulle. Peyrefitte records the general's thoughts, analyses, insights and side-swipes (against François Mitterrand, for example) as gleaned from a succession of cabinet meetings.

When the US began its systematic bombardment of North Vietnam early in 1965, De Gaulle opined: "In fact this is a war between America and Asia for domination of the Pacific. It will therefore last a very, very long time . . . Unless the Americans decide of their own free will to pull out, the war will last 10 years. It will end in shame. It will be an indelible blot on the face of America."

Meanwhile less dramatic events were taking place on the French domestic front. That did not stop De Gaulle grumbling about farmers ("never happy"), haggling for weeks over milk prices, berating Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing because they had made concessions over civil servants' pay, or fulminating against the press, that "hostile stronghold", and against journalists, who can never be prevented from "pissing their vinegar".

But the most fascinating aspect of De Gaulle's remarks is their relevance to more recent events. On July 22, 1964, he was peremptory, when comparing rightwingers with leftwingers: "The right is just as stupid. The right likes routine, doesn't want to change anything and doesn't understand anything. But it doesn't make its voice heard so much. It has not infiltrated the press and academia so much. It is less eloquent. It is more withdrawn. The left, on the other hand, is talkative and full of beans. It forms parties, holds conferences, organises petitions, makes appeals and claims to have talent. That is something to which the right does not lay claim. People are slightly ashamed of being rightwing, whereas they flaunt their leftwing views."

De Gaulle himself, of course, was above all this: "To be a Gaullist is to be leftwing and rightwing at the same time," he announced while travelling by train to Oyonnax in 1963.

One is again reminded of recent history when, at a cabinet meeting in July 1964, Louis Joxe reports on a trip he made to Yugoslavia. De Gaulle remarks: "Joxe says Tito is a national hero. I don't see why that shouldn't be the case, except that there would have to be a Yugoslav nation, and there is not. There are just little bits of wood that hang together because they are tied up with a piece of string. The piece of string is Tito. Once he goes, the bits of wood will fall apart."

One cannot help thinking of President Jacques Chirac's disastrous decision to call a snap election last June as one reads Peyrefitte's account of his own conversation with De Gaulle just after he had been re-elected president in December 1965. He suggested to the general that he should dissolve the national assembly and thus be certain of "a good five years".

De Gaulle replied: "I shall eschew such a course, for several reasons. First, because no one would understand such a dissolution. Secondly, because that dissolution would make the two terms of office [the presidential and the parliamentary] coincide. It would encourage the notion that the presidential term needed to be ratified by a general election.

"Finally, there is nothing to prove that we would win that general election. And if we were to lose it, I would have no alternative but to stand down. What sort of man would I be if I hung on in office after being repudiated by the people. What authority would I have?" As so often, De Gaulle hit the nail on the head.

(October 31)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

U.S. Revises Plans on Nuclear War

R. Jeffrey Smith

PRESIDENT Clinton last month issued new guidelines for the targeting of U.S. nuclear weapons, jettisoning a Cold War dictum that the military must be prepared to win a protracted nuclear war that would devastate the globe, according to senior administration officials.

Clinton's new orders to the Secretary of Defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff require instead that the military aim its nuclear forces to deter the use of nuclear arms against U.S. forces or allies simply by threatening a devastating response, and drop any planning for a long nuclear war, the officials said.

Clinton's highly classified directive replaces one signed by President Reagan in 1981 and marks the first time since the end of the Cold War that nuclear targeting guidance issued at the presidential level formally recognizes that no nation would emerge as the victor in a major nuclear exchange, the officials said.

But the directive nonetheless calls for U.S. war planners to retain longstanding options for nuclear strikes against the military and civilian leadership and nuclear forces in Russia. Such planning reflects a widespread view among military officials in both nations that each side still poses a potential nuclear threat to the other — even though Washington has proposed to give Moscow $242 million in foreign aid next year.

Several sources said the directive's language further allows targeters to broaden the list of sites that might be struck in the unlikely event of a nuclear exchange with China. In addition, the sources said, the directive contains language that would permit U.S. nuclear strikes after enemy attacks using chemical or biological weapons, an idea that has been hotly debated by independent arms control experts.

Clinton's action marks the first formal adjustment in 16 years of presidential policy for the targeting of U.S. nuclear weapons and could pave the way for further reductions in the total number of such weapons by requiring that fewer be held in reserve for a protracted war, several senior officials said.

But they added that the directive reflects more continuity than change in the military's effort to ensure that its strategic nuclear arms are ready to use at a moment's notice, an effort that costs an estimated $33 billion annually.

The document affirms, for example, that the United States will continue to rely on nuclear arms as a cornerstone of its national security for the "indefinite future," and that it will retain a triad of nuclear forces consisting of bombers, land-based missiles and submarine-based missiles, according to Robert G. Bell, a special assistant to the president and senior director for defense policy at the National Security Council.

Independent critics of U.S. nuclear policy have suggested that Washington consider following the example of France, which gave up its vulnerable force of land-based strategic missiles, partly to save money and partly to undercut incentives for an enemy first-strike against such missiles. Both France and England rely solely on nuclear-equipped bombers and submarine weapons for deterrence.

Several sources said the presidential decision directive, known informally as a PDD, was prepared within an extraordinarily restricted circle of senior policymakers — numbering no more than two dozen people — from the National Security Council, the Defense Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the CIA, and the State Department, as well as the office of Vice President Gore.

The document sets only broad targeting policy and will be translated over the next 10 months into more concrete military requirements — such as preparations to strike specific targets — by the military staff of the Strategic Command, headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, the officials said.

Bell last week declined to specify the length of the directive, the date it was signed or its formal title; he also declined to answer questions about the countries it names as targets of U.S. nuclear arms. He said that the secretive deliberations were warranted by their extreme sensitivity.

"The presidential directive describes in general fashion the purposes U.S. nuclear weapons serve and provides broad guidance for military planners who prepare the actual operations plans and targeting plans for our nuclear forces," Bell said. It "recognizes that [because] we're at the end of the Cold War" and many changes have occurred in Russia and elsewhere over the past seven years, "nuclear weapons now play a smaller role in our nuclear security strategy than at any point during the nuclear era."

Troubles in Haiti Outlive U.N. Troops

Serge F. Kovaleski in Port-au-Prince

A U.N. peacekeeping mission undertaken three years ago to help restore democracy and stop political violence here ended last week, leaving Haiti still grappling with a pernicious stew of problems that have raised doubts about the effectiveness of the international effort.

When international forces led by 20,000 U.S. troops came ashore in September 1994 to dismantle a military dictatorship and reinstate Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the country's first freely elected president, hope and jubilation swept this Caribbean nation. But those emotions have been eclipsed by a deep sense of pessimism, frustration and anger directed at the country's leaders.

Hamstrung by political infighting, Haiti's government is lurching toward its seventh month without a prime minister, leaving it essentially incapable of functioning and stalling a crucial economic recovery program. Peaceful elections have been held, but the last major ballot, in April, was marred by allegations of irregularities.

The paralysis cost Haiti $120 million in foreign aid this year and has discouraged foreign investment in a country where an estimated 70 percent of the population of 7 million is either unemployed or underemployed. Long stretches of road, many built by the U.S. military, are crumbling, and most Haitians still have no electricity, telephones or clean water.

But what is perhaps most unsettling about Haiti's current situation is the specter of politically motivated violence after three years of calm — a development that could prove to be a daunting challenge for the newly formed and inexperienced Haitian National Police.



A U.S. police officer directs troops as Haitian police stop looters ransacking a food store in 1994. Today hunger remains, amid mass unemployment

A number of men who belonged to the feared Ton-Tons Macoutes under the dictatorships of Francois Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude said that they have been waiting for the 1,170 remaining U.N. troops to leave so they can take up arms against the government of President Rene Preval as well as Aristide and Parliament. "We are organizing again and collecting money and guns; we are ready, and you will see Macoute violence soon," one former member said.

Police say they have linked a grenade attack in downtown Port-au-Prince last month in which a woman was killed and 14 others injured to a plot to assassinate Preval, Aristide and top government officials.

Robert Manuel, secretary of state for public security, said there are a number of "anti-democratic interests" — including international drug traffickers — who are intent on destabilizing Haiti's struggling democracy.

Three years after Aristide was driven into exile in 1991 by a military coup, President Clinton poured U.S. troops into the country to restore the democratically elected Aristide to power and halt a large Haitian migration to the United States.

Observers point out that despite the threats of political violence, the country is better off today than when the Haitian army, since dismantled, and state-sponsored security groups carried out unrelenting campaigns of terror.

On the other hand, some fear that the new police force is vulnerable to becoming a tool for advancing political agendas. The 5,300-member department, while an improvement over previous security forces in respecting human rights, continues to be plagued by corruption, abuse of power and other offenses. In the last few weeks, more than 20 officers have been arrested on drug-trafficking charges.

Enrique ter Horst, chief of the U.N. mission here, acknowledged that Haiti has a long way to go. "Haiti is a country that still has not left the intensive care ward," he said. Yet he believes "it is a better place in the sense that the learning of democracy has advanced even though it has not produced results. It has been a costly process."

The U.N. presence in Haiti will not end with the withdrawal; the Security Council agreed last week to establish a new civilian police mission of up to 300 members to continue training the Haitian force for another year. About 500 noncombat U.S. troops remain in Haiti, ostensibly to build roads, bridges and wells.

Bailout of Seoul Tops $60 Billion

Paul Blustein

SOUTH KOREA accepted pledges of assistance from several more nations last week, bringing the amount of its record international bailout to more than $60 billion.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the board of the International Monetary Fund formally approved a $21 billion line of credit for Seoul, its largest ever for a single country.

The aid promises came as the IMF and the Seoul government released details of the conditions that South Korean authorities were forced to accept for the rescue package to be granted. The conditions include measures aimed at drastically weakening "Korea Inc." — the system by which the government fosters the growth of favored industries and companies by ensuring that they receive loans and subsidies.

Among the promises made by Korea are plans to open the banking sector to increased foreign competition and raise the ceiling on foreign ownership of publicly held companies from 26 percent to 50 percent. Seoul would also allow Korean companies to borrow abroad directly instead of through Korean banks.

Such measures have been staunchly resisted for years by the Korean bureaucracy, which has maintained tight control over the entire financial system as one of the key elements of its industrial policy. By directing banks to funnel money to industries they considered promising, the bureaucrats helped build Korea's formidable shipbuilding, steel, auto and electronics giants.

But an IMF statement issued after a board meeting last week was sharply critical of the Korea Inc. approach.

"The limitations of Korea's system of detailed government intervention at the micro level have become increasingly apparent," the IMF said. "Since the beginning of the year, an unprecedented number of highly leveraged conglomerates [chaebols] have moved into bankruptcy . . . The bankruptcies severely weakened the financial system and non-performing loans rose sharply."

The IMF said $5.56 billion of its funds would be made available to Seoul immediately, with subsequent disbursements contingent on Korean adherence to the conditions set for the aid.

In Seoul, meanwhile, Finance Minister Lim Chang-ryul said last week that the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden had offered to join several other countries in the IMF-led rescue, raising the total resources pledged to more than $60 billion. The package, which includes a promise by the United States to lend $5 billion if needed, was put at $55 billion when it was unveiled by Lim and IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus.

121 Countries Sign Ban on Land Mines

Howard Schneider in Ottawa

FOREIGN MINISTERS from dozens of nations signed a treaty last week banning the production and use of anti-personnel land mines, the cornerstone of efforts to eliminate a device that has served as a military staple but is now viewed as a scourge for civilians who live near abandoned minefields.

Used extensively in civil, regional and world conflicts during this century, tens of millions of the weapons remain buried in former war zones, killing and injuring thousands of civilians annually and turning a walk to school or to the well into a daily hazard.

After a five-year campaign that was initiated by private advocacy groups, given a high profile by Princess Diana and provided diplomatic impetus by Canada, the global ban became a reality last week. Foreign ministers from Canada, Norway and South Africa were the first to sign the agreement, and diplomats from 118 countries later added their signatures. Ratification by those nations is expected to follow quickly.

The outpouring of support, led by middle powers like Canada and with representatives from all continents, showed that disarmament goals can be reached even without the signatures of the world's three principal military powers, said Jody Williams, coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and recipient of this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

"In the next century we can live in a mine-free world where we are the superpower," Williams said, referring to the coalition of government and nongovernmental groups that produced the treaty. "The post-Cold War world is different."

Neither the United States, Russia nor China is signing the treaty, though the Clinton administration is committing $80 million annually to mine-clearance programs and has set deadlines for the Pentagon to find alternatives for the situations in which its strategists still find the mines useful. The chief concern is for U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, where land mines are used to defend against a possible attack by Communist North Korea.

Karl F. Inderfurth, newly appointed U.S. special representative for global humanitarian demining, attended. He said that even though the United States is not signing, it supports the treaty's goals. "This is something our government is committed to," he said, explaining that Washington will back the demining effort treaty supporters now hope to undertake.

That wasn't good enough for the other Americans here, including nongovernmental groups that helped initiate the land mine ban and politicians such as Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vermont, who have introduced legislation they hope will force President Clinton to sign the treaty.

"Our country is sitting on the sidelines," said Susannah Sirkin, deputy director of Physicians for Human Rights. "It is time for President Clinton to take the most minimal of risks."

Other countries that aren't signing include Israel and its Arab neighbors, as well as Pakistan, India, Turkey and Afghanistan.

Still, the treaty was heralded as a victory of humanitarianism over perceived military necessity. The treaty is "a landmark step in the history of disarmament . . . a victory for the weak and vulnerable of the world," said U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan."

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, whose government became the first both to sign and ratify the treaty, said its impact would be felt "from the rice fields of Cambodia to the suburbs of Kabul, from the mountainsides of Sarajevo to the plains of Mozambique."

● Russia is ready to join an international ban on use of land mines after finding a substitute for anti-personnel mines it uses to guard nuclear and other military installations, the Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

Interfax news agency quoted Gennady Tarasov, a senior ministry official, as saying that Russia would sign the ban treaty "within a reasonable future time frame", but gave no further information.

John Ryle, page 23



Flanked by judges, Coleman Young takes the oath of office on becoming Detroit's first black mayor in 1974

Black Hope in Motown

OBITUARY
Coleman A. Young

COLEMAN A. YOUNG, 79, one of the country's most outspoken African American politicians and a former mayor of Detroit who struggled to stem the tide of economic and social problems that made the Motor City a symbol of urban decay, died last week at a hospital in Detroit.

In the course of his career, Mr. Young was a union organizer, an insurance salesman, a member of Michigan's constitutional convention and a state senator. In 1968, he became the first black member of the Democratic National Committee, and in January 1974 he was the first black to be inaugurated as mayor of Detroit, having won a narrow victory over a white former police commissioner. He held the office for five terms until 1993, when he declined to run again.

A man of seeming contradiction, Mr. Young could be as effective in the halls of corporate power as he was on the meanest street corner. In his public pronouncements, he attributed his city's problems to the white suburbs, Republican stinginess and the media. His conversation often included the "n" and "m-f" words. Critics chided him for the extravagance of his personal style, but he paid little attention.

The bedrock of his policy was the idea that in order to survive, the city needed more jobs and businesses, not just public works. To that end, he persuaded the Michigan government to give the city tax breaks to attract investments. He played a key role in providing land and incentives for new Chrysler and General Motors plants. To keep the city from going into default, he imposed on Detroit residents the highest taxes in the state.

Mr. Young's most important achievement may have been to give blacks a sense of pride and empowerment. "He took office and franchised a segment of the population that had been disenfranchised," said Bob Berg, Young's press secretary for the last 11 years he held office.

But vast areas of the city remained blighted. Crime was a problem. The school system was described as a disaster. City services lagged. Business owners complained that it was difficult to attract talent from other parts of the country. The population declined from 1.8 million in the 1960s to just under 1 million in the 1990s, with blacks making up more than three-quarters of those who remained.

Coleman Alexander Young was born May 24, 1918, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. When he was 5, the family moved to Detroit.

Young, whose family had converted to Catholicism, was refused admission to a Catholic high school because he was black. He graduated from Detroit's Eastern High School with honors, but he never made it to college, apparently because of prejudicial scholarship practices.

He went to work for the Ford Motor Co. and became a clandestine union organizer. He was fired after getting into a fight with a white employee and then went to work for the Post Office. After his World War II Army service, he returned to the Post Office and continued his union activities.

Mr. Young's activities on the progressive fringes were enough to bring charges that he was a communist sympathizer and in 1952, he was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

His breakthrough in politics came in 1961, when he was elected as a delegate to the state constitutional convention. While serving in that capacity, he wrote a proposal that two years later led to the establishment of a civil rights commission. In Hard Stuff, an autobiography published in 1994, Mr. Young offered this assessment of his performance as mayor:

"Hell no, I don't think Detroit is better off than it was when I became mayor. The auto industry certainly isn't better off than it was in 1974. The job market certainly isn't better off than it was then. How the hell could Detroit be better off? But I damn sure think it's better off for me becoming mayor."

Sex Talk Show Breaks Taboo in Russia

Daniel Williams in Moscow

EARLY HINTS of Russia's sexual revolution first surfaced perhaps in the late 1970s, when a Soviet publication noted an increase in premarital sex among young people. Publication of such data must mean a sudden epidemic of raging Soviet hormones, foreign reports at the time conjectured.

Then came the 1980s, *glasnost's* openness and the appearance of skin magazines, movies that showed naked people, calls for sex education, contraceptives and worries about AIDS.

Now the 1990s, and long kisses on the Moscow riverfront, short liaisons in Moscow bushes, impromptu stripping in bars, all-male gay underwater ballets and, finally, the indication that Russia's sexual revolution is crossing the ultimate threshold: talk. Every week on TV.

The venue for this breakthrough is a show called About That, where for 40 minutes each Saturday night Russians discuss the once-undiscussable. Such as the secrets of what men and women like, May-December romances, homosexuality, virginity, masturbation, cross-dressing, whips — you name it. Such subjects are staples of American televised blab-a-thons, but Russians have never been noted for discussing their sex lives, much less for broadcasting their tastes to millions of viewers.

The name of the show refers to the way Russians sometimes refer to sex — simply as "that." In 1987, authors of a sex manual asked potential readers to nominate a title. They told the readers to put the words "About That" on the envelope when sending in their suggestions.

The show is broadcast on NTV, a network owned by a prominent banker and media magnate, Vladimir Gusinsky. NTV is the king of late-night titillation: Among its innovations is an amateur strip show.

Besides the quest for ratings, producers of About That claim to have a social mission. "It's time to talk about it, because the sexual revolution is fast-moving," said Bolat Akunov, one of the show's producers.

Guests write or phone in about their problems or exploits and then get invited to the show by category. Their tales range from the commonplace to the bizarre. Women dream of tall, dark and handsome men on beaches in Spain; men, of tall, dark and beautiful women on beaches in Spain. A gay man wants to sleep with Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise. A soldier wants to make love to a woman while parachuting. ("I think the feelings would be very sharp — will the parachute open or not?") Sex experts give on-air advice.

A few touches are peculiar to Russia. Perhaps only in Moscow can someone have a fetish for the leather seats on its subway trains. Fantasizing about literature teachers is a big thing.

Traditional reserve about discussing sex is commonly attributed to the years of official Soviet puritanism. In the early years of Communist rule, the Bolsheviks cultivated an image of sexual freedom to contrast with bourgeois propriety. But such casualness quickly gave way to Stalinist rigidity. Licentiousness was branded as a symptom of Western decadence.

In reaction to this 19th-century moralism, the early 20th century saw an explosion of sexual literature, in a period when censorship was lifted before the Bolshevik takeover. It is hard not to see parallels with the current rush of sexual freedom after the collapse of communism.

In any case, there is wide agreement that in the new Russia, promiscuity has been on the rise. "The important thing here is that people's ideas about sex, techniques, contraceptives and about feelings associated with sex have expanded," said Anna Varga, a psychotherapist at the Moscow Center for Mental Health. "Different generations started talking about sex. A mother can now discuss these issues with her daughter, which in former times was impossible."

That is not to say the revolution has been without its casualties. Venereal disease has become rampant; there are 285 cases of syphilis per 100,000 people in Russia, a rate 40 times that of 1990 and about 100 times that in Western Europe.

AIDS is on the rise, too, although this has as much to do with the injection of illegal drugs as with unrestrained sex. The number of officially registered HIV cases in 1996 was 50 percent more than in the previous 10 years combined, with [illegible] percent of them said to be the result of drug users sharing needles.

Death Comes Sooner for D.C.'s Black Men

David Brown and Avram Goldstein

MEN in Washington have nearly the shortest life span of any population group in the United States, while their counterparts across the Potomac River in Fairfax County are nearly the longest-lived men, a new study has found. An average man's life in the two places differs by 14.5 years. When the country is divided into more than 2,000 distinct cities and counties, male longevity in these abutting jurisdictions is at opposite poles.

For black male Washingtonians, the 1990 life expectancy of 57.9 years is second shortest in the country. Only Oglala Sioux men of the Pine Ridge Reservation, who live an average of 56.5 years, are likely to die younger. These life expectancies are similar to ones seen in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, and are lower than those of any nation in the western hemisphere except Haiti, the study found.

At the long-lived end of the spectrum, Asian women in northern New Jersey have a life expectancy of 97.7 years, four decades longer than black District men.

These statistics are part of a study by epidemiologists at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The project, begun in 1996, seeks to make sense of the huge, largely undigested body of health statistics available for every county in the United States.

Although not yet complete, the study's preliminary findings sketch a picture of the United States as a place of longevity extremes, and apparently widening differences in healthiness. The country contains some of the longest-lived populations seen anywhere in the world, as well as pockets of people whose expected life spans are worse than those of some African countries.

The findings were presented last week at the 12th Chronic Disease Conference in Washington. The project is an outgrowth of the Global Burden of Disease study, whose 975-page report was published two years ago. In it, a team of epidemiologists analyzed the contribution that 107 different diseases and injuries make to the death, disability, and chronic ill health in each of the world's countries.

The study eventually will provide similar insight into the health of Americans at a level of detail reaching down to nearly every county in the United States. Its ultimate purpose is to help provide a road map for public health policy over the next several decades.

While the finding that different ethnic, racial and regional populations in the nation have different life spans is not new — many studies have shown it — the size of the differences is larger than previously believed.

"The biggest surprise was the magnitude of the range of differences in life expectancy," said Christopher J.L. Murray, a physician and health economist at the Harvard School of Public Health, who leads the project. "I am concerned by this incredible spread."

For men of all races, Washington had the second-shortest life expectancy out of the more than 2,000 jurisdictions in which it was measured. Men here lived on average [illegible]2 years. Only men in five South Dakota counties — which include the Pine Ridge Reservation — have shorter life spans, 61 years on average.

In contrast, men in South Africa and India have a life expectancy of 60 years. Men in Bolivia live about 59 years. Russian men, whose declining life expectancies have shocked many epidemiologists, live about 65 years.

For example, the shortest-lived national population in the world is men in the West African country of Sierra Leone, who live an average of 45 years. The population with the greatest longevity is women in Japan, whose life expectancy is 83 years.

The report did not address reasons for the regional and ethnic differences in the United States, although further analysis to be done over the next year may shed light on that. Nevertheless, local health officials last week said they have explanations.

"It's not surprising to me, unfortunately," said Allan Noonan, director of the D.C. Department of Health, who has been in office since September. "If you look at most geographic areas, the life expectancy for black men is usually about 10 years lower than overall, and usually the lowest of any population group. It's sad but, I'm sure, true."

About 67 percent of the District's population is black. Noonan said he believes the lives of Washington's African Americans are harmed by limited access to medical care, delayed diagnosis of disease and a high homicide rate.

"You take those factors, and tie them in with poverty and other social issues, and this is the result," he said. "We need to inculcate the need for preventive health in young black males. We need to tell them: Don't smoke, don't use drugs, exercise, eat appropriately and wear a condom."

Fairfax County's health director, Robert B. Stroube, said his jurisdiction's rate of cardiovascular disease and other chronic illnesses is lower than most jurisdictions because Fairfax's residents tend to have high income, advanced education, ready access to good medical care, good diets and lifestyles that often include regular exercise.

"The higher the socioeconomic status of a community, the longer its life expectancy," Stroube said. "We have a lot of the advantages."

Murray and his colleagues found that these differences in longevity have grown in recent decades. While the average life expectancy of every major ethnic, sex and regional group in the country has increased since 1980, the life spans of the 2 per cent of men and women with the shortest longevity have barely budged. This suggests there are pockets of the United States where recent gains in health — fueled by rising income, healthier lifestyles and better medical care — have barely been felt.

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Perspectives on a Dictator

Richard Breitman

THE HITLER OF HISTORY
By John Lukacs
Knopf. 279 pp. $26

THE Hitler Of History is not a biography but an extended and insightful comparison of many biographies and biographers of Adolf Hitler. More than a hundred biographers have examined the man, his regime and the war they brought about, but John Lukacs argues that a number of key issues remain unclear or misunderstood. By setting the biographies against each other and by interposing his own reflections, Lukacs manages to achieve greater clarity and a sensible perspective.

The Hungarian-born, British-trained Lukacs has had contact with the academic world, but he is not a career professor, which gives him an interesting perspective on biographers. He finds no particular reason to give preference to academic works, though he concedes that every serious biographer must know a good deal of history. Non-professionals, he maintains, may know more of the world than those inside ivory towers.

It is, however, worth noting that non-academics wrote most of the studies Lukacs regards as apologetic or irresponsible. (David Irving, author of Hitler's War, receives much attention here.) The academic system has plenty of flaws, but it does require professionals to submit their work (and sources) to the scrutiny and judgment of their peers. Alas, however, the academy does not require good style, and biographies have not been the fashion there for quite some time. It would also take an academic many years, perhaps a decade, to collect and master the relevant documents for a solid biography of Hitler.

Of the well-known post-World War II biographies in English, Lukacs finds historian Alan Bullock's early work Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (1953) an important achievement weakened by a one-dimensional portrait of the man: Hitler was simply an unprincipled opportunist. The work of German journalist Joachim Fest, Hitler (1973), drew upon several decades of research by others and was more nuanced, but it was not terribly original and had limited coverage of the war. John Toland's 1977 portrait Adolf Hitler was gossipy and less acceptable to the academics; it also contained, despite some ritual condemnations of Hitler and Nazism, more than a few traces of admiration for the subject. These criticisms are very much on target, and Lukacs demonstrates a fine touch in locating the weaknesses of many other works as well.

Lukacs deals effectively with Hitler's personal life, where the evidence is relatively thin and the historian's judgment is critical. Discounting Hitler's own claims and the arguments of some biographers, Lukacs maintains that Hitler's view of the world and his political aspirations crystallized not in Vienna but in Munich during 1919. Lukacs sensibly assesses Hitler's medical problems (digestive disorders and Parkinson's disease late in his life); only Hitler's concern that he would die early substantially influenced his political behavior and career. Lukacs also accurately diagnoses Hitler's penchant for secrecy, which became part of his political style.

Those familiar with academic studies will find Lukacs's discussion of Hitler's racial thought and anti-Semitism less persuasive. Fighting against the current trend, Lukacs declares that Hitler was more nationalist than racist: "his governing obsessions were not biological." Lukacs invokes some of Hitler's statements that support this view; he ignores contrary evidence. He finds Hitler's anti-Semitism deeper and more consistent than his racism, but his brief treatment of the Holocaust is marred by some unnecessary missteps, such as the statement that at least 4.5 million Jews were murdered. That number is not only well below the range accepted by specialists; it comes out of nowhere.

Lukacs recognizes Hitler's not insubstantial talents as a politician and statesman and connects his foreign policy successes with his popularity among the Germans. Hitler was a populist revolutionary and dictator in a democratic age.

Graduate students in history learn the intellectual value of studying historiography — how the history of a given subject has been written over time. It is, however, no easy task to make historiography interesting and accessible to a broad audience. The Hitler Of History succeeds, and it encourages one to read those useful biographies one has missed.

Nonny's Excellent Adventure

Dwight Garner

THE ZIGZAG KID
By David Grossman
Translated from the Hebrew
by Betsy Rosenberg
Farrar Straus Giroux. 309 pp. $24

WHAT DO children want? If you believe Israeli novelist David Grossman, in his lively and fable-like new novel The Zigzag Kid, what older kids crave most are the very things parents usually deny them: freedom, some genuine adventure, and a sense of being trusted to listen in on a few of the adult world's alluring secrets. They're tired of being infantilized. The Zigzag Kid is about what happens when one boy, 12-year-old Nonny Feurberg, has his wildest dreams of adventure fulfilled. He's forced to hang on for a breathless ride, and happily so are we.

The Zigzag Kid is, at heart, a galloping road novel. This is a departure for Grossman, who is the author of two striking and intensely melancholy novels — See Under: Love and The Book Of Intimate Grammar — as well as several well-regarded works of nonfiction. When we first meet Nonny Feurberg, he's a few weeks away from his bar mitzvah, and he's boarding a train to visit a distant uncle — a man Nonny so dislikes that he fears the uncle will kill him with "didactic poisoning." Watching from his window as the train pulls away, Nonny worries that his father — who is a famous detective in Jerusalem — is about to end his relationship with Gabi, a woman who has always been like a mother to him. (Nonny's biological mother died shortly after his birth.)

From this point, The Zigzag Kid goes into a splendid, electric kind of free float. Grossman jolts you with so many narrative surprises, and they are so integral to this novel's charm, that a reviewer must step carefully lest he reveal too much. Minutes after the train is under way, a series of odd events begins to happen around Nonny, the most important of which is that he befriends an older man — a man with "flashing blue daredevil eyes" and "a dark magnetic power" — who turns out to be Felix Glick, an internationally famous con man and thief. Thinking that his parents meant for him to meet Felix and to have a few adventures with him as a bar mitzvah gift, Nonny isn't afraid. He feels like he's stepping, with some trepidation, right into adulthood.

Growing up in Jerusalem, Nonny wasn't a particularly wild kid. "True, I had secretly smoked a couple of cigarettes down to the butt, and inhaled, too, and true, I had kissed three girls in my class, only on a dare, though." But before long, Felix escorts Nonny to the front of the train, where he convinces the conductor to let Nonny take a turn behind the wheel. Following that, Felix pulls out a gun and orders the train to a screeching halt.

What follows is a series of grand adventures — Felix and Nonny roar through the countryside in a Bugatti and then in a Volkswagen Beetle, wearing disguises, avoiding police, walking out on restaurant bills. Felix tells Nonny they can do whatever he wants: "Should I climb up to the roof of one of the embassies and change the flag, as [your] Dad did once before he joined the police force? Or steal a zebra from the zoo and ride away on it?" Nonny is torn by all this. On one hand, he feels guilty for getting so much pleasure out of this wild liberation. On the other, he wants to "be worthy of Felix, to take risks, to be crazy, to be a criminal." He feels he's passing "beyond brattiness into a world of grownups and guns and real crime."

It's to Grossman's credit that these events signify as more than mere escapades. It's clear from very early in the novel that Felix knows more about Nonny and his family than he's letting on. As The Zigzag Kid progresses — and as Nonny becomes the focus of a nationwide manhunt — both Felix and Nonny learn more about one another than they had ever expected to. Grossman is skillful at getting to the heart of the sadness that lingers over Felix's life, despite his penchant for extravagant (and often illegal) gestures. He's even more skillful at evoking that wonderful feeling that children sometimes get, in their most intense moments, when they and their friends feel that they are the only real people in the world and "everyone else [is] an actor in our play."

The Zigzag Kid isn't a perfect novel. There are a few moments where Grossman seems to be making scenes up on the fly. He also borrows a bit too much from J.D. Salinger. But these are small complaints. Grossman has written a minor novel that has a major kick.

Voice for the Wilderness

Bill McKibben

RACHEL CARSON:
Witness for Nature
By Linda Lear
Henry Holt. 634 pp. $35

THE MORE time passes, the larger Rachel Carson looms. By now Silent Spring seems a rare fulcrum point in our history, a work that began to change our very understanding of who we are and what our place in the order of things might be. A few weeks after its publication in the fall of 1963, she told a Washington audience that her mail already showed a change in public attitudes, a willingness to ask questions. People no longer "assumed that someone was looking after things," a sentiment that explains much of the late 20th century in America. The flavor of the world changed when Carson in Silent Spring unmasked some of the chemical agents driving Progress, and that can be said of a bare handful of books.

We need, then, a definitive biography of Carson in order to understand how and why she drew back her bow and let fly. Linda Lear, a professor of environmental history at George Washington, provides us with such a book — competent, careful, comprehensive. If it is not perfect, if it fails to quite explain how Carson made the leap to a kind of radicalism in Silent Spring, this is because Lear is a modest and earthbound biographer. And that fits her subject completely.

Carson, born in a small Pennsylvania river town at the turn of the century, was years younger than her brother and sister. She spent a lot of time alone, wandering the woods and fields, which is the cliched-but-true beginning to the life story of nearly every naturalist I know. Her famous reserve came partly from the isolation of her childhood, partly from the shame of a failed-middle-class kind of poverty, and partly from the constant, almost smothering attention of her mother, who followed her even to college, arriving almost every weekend to sit on the bed, eat cookies, and chat. Pennsylvania College for Women offered Carson mentors both for writing and biology; it was science that grabbed her first, leading her to Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory and then on to Johns Hopkins, where she earned a masters in zoology. The Depression and her gender made an academic career unlikely, so she went to work instead for the federal government, editing and writing pamphlets for the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Interior Department.

Those pamphlets turned into feature articles for newspapers and magazines and finally, after many years, into The Sea Around Us and The Edge Of The Sea, which were published to great success in the 1950s. The Sea Around Us, which offered most people their first real glimpse beneath the ocean's surface, spent 32 weeks atop the best-seller list, and The Edge Of The Sea joined it in the top 10 immediately upon publication.

But had she stopped with those books, Carson would have faded away by now. Instead, she almost by accident began stumbling across new studies being done on the pesticides that had emerged during and after World War II and were now being sprayed by airplanes and tanker trucks the length and breadth of the nation. Working amid the distractions of her literary fame and of a metastasizing cancer, she somehow compiled this collection of obscure data into Silent Spring, which she originally intended to title "Man Against the Earth."

Its three-part publication in the New Yorker set off a storm that occupied the last few years of Carson's life. The chemical companies reacted with expensive fury, but President John F. Kennedy and Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall helped ensure that her work would lead to the first Clean Water Act. Carson, Lear reminds us, was not really equipped for such battles, but she rose to the occasion, staunch and eloquent in public, though in private she leaned hard on her few close friends.

This book could not come at a better time. The fight against toxic pollutants, shows signs of final triumph — President Clinton's decision to back new EPA standards on clean air is the direct descendant of the legislation passed in the wake of Silent Spring. But the next great fulcrum point is at hand. Somehow we must reverse the even larger tragedy that stems from the sheer *volume* of our appetites. Global warming is chief among these problems, and many of the same industrialists and public relations firms that battled Carson in the 1960s have managed to so confuse the public that America now blocks international progress on the issue.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
December 14 1997

Japan's betrayal of the salaryman

Andrew Higgins in Tokyo meets the foot soldiers of an economic empire in decline

IN FRONT of electronic panels flashing orange-coloured numbers cracks the calm of the salaryman, dispirited foot soldier of an economic empire in retreat. The figures, on display in Tokyo's financial district, relate not to the collapsing share prices of Japan's brittle banks but something far more fundamental — 18-hole golf courses.

The figures are provided by Eagle Golf, a broker of country-club memberships just down the corridor from a branch of the defunct Yamaichi Securities. They signal Japan's economic malaise. The prices of what was a fail-safe investment and status symbol are in a nose-dive.

"The price keeps going down. Nothing goes up any more," groaned Masami Fukushima, a life insurance manager and weekend golfer. "The golden age of the golf club is over. It is finished."

Like legions of other salarymen Mr Fukushima splashed out during the *baburu*, or bubble-boom, of the 1980s to buy a club membership. For 3.9 million yen ($30,000) he secured the right to drive out of Tokyo each weekend and fork out $250 in green fees for a round of golf. It was, he calculated, a sure-fire investment.

His membership is now worth only 500,000 yen — less than 10 per cent of its peak value of 7 million. The price, set by brokers, has halved within two weeks.

The despair of Japan's golfers reveals the rotten core of its economy and helps explain why its financial system is groaning under the weight of bad debts officially calculated at more than $200 billion, but thought to be far higher.

The immediate cause for gloom is the death of Yamaichi Securities. A string of banks has gone under, and others will follow. Foreign deposit-takers report brisk business as Japanese shift money into what they hope are safer hands.

The roots of the crisis lie in a failure to control the boom or deal with the bad debts that have built up since the bubble burst. The air has gone out of the inflated assets that once made Japan feel so rich — and the rest of the world shudder as Japanese went on a shopping spree, snatching New York's Rockefeller Center, chunks of Hollywood and symbolic foreign properties, such as the former headquarters of the Greater London Council.

The calculations based on bubble-era prices are finally coming unstuck. In Ohtemachi, Tokyo's answer to the City, bookshops hawk self-help crisis primers and how-to bankruptcy guides. The bombast of boom-era tracts has given way to self-flagellation. Typical of the mood is a collection of essays: Vanishing Japan, and Lazy Japanese. For bankers seeking solace there is The Sun Will Definitely Rise Again.

The government has changed its vocabulary, too. The director of the economic planning agency announced a long-overdue shift in official nomenclature last week: "It is appropriate to say that the economy is at a standstill, without adding such phrases like 'in the process of recovery', as the government used to do," said Kohi Omi. Eureka! After spending 60 trillion yen on fruitless "packages", Japan's mandarins finally accepted that the country is in recession, with growth expected at around 1 per cent this year.

But Japan as a stumbling shadow is as alarming as the old caricature of an omnivorous Godzilla. It remains a potent force, but perceptions matter, particularly those of the Japanese themselves.

Amid the hype about Asia's tigers it was forgotten that Japan was the powerhouse. Its banks' loans, of $250 billion, dwarfed the $40 billion from the US.

Asian countries conquered by Japan during the second world war face the prospect of a Japan in retreat. At a meeting last month of the Asia Pacific Economic Forum, the prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, said Japan could no longer act as the region's "locomotive". Tokyo's Export-Import Bank last week said: "Japanese investments in Asia have peaked."

The old confidence has gone, and there are fears that a more inward-looking Japan could mutate Asia's sickness into a global contagion. A sign of the virus spreading would be any move by Japanese banks and institutions to unload their $210 billion of US treasury bonds.

SO IMPORTANT is Japan to the world economy that a wrong step could bring catastrophe. During a visit to Tokyo last week, the head of the International Monetary Fund, Michel Camdessus, spoke exuberantly about the travails of South Korea, Russia and Indonesia. Asked about Japan, though, he referred repeatedly to notes, measuring his words.

The demise of Yamaichi, Japan's biggest bankruptcy since the second world war, came as a shock — not because anyone had any illusions about its health. What traumatised the financial industry was that the government let Yamaichi go under. After denying there was any problem until the last minute, authorities stopped trying to plug the dike with artful legerdemain and statistical obfuscation. They had little choice. Keeping Japan's banks and brokers afloat had been the "convoy system", under which strong firms, guided by the finance ministry, rescued the weak in times of turbulence.

But solidarity is crumbling. Last month Sanyo Securities sent out an SOS to the convoy. The government urged brokerages to rush to the rescue, but none came. Sanyo sank. The question now is just how far insolvent banks and brokerages will be left to fend for themselves. Mr Hashimoto's government has already made clear it is pressing for taxpayer's money to be used to compensate customers.

While Eagle Golf struggled this week to sell country club memberships that nobody wants to buy, a branch manager of Yamaichi Securities was presiding over the wreckage of his career and, he said, his life. He laboured to keep up appearances, posting two staff at the door to greet customers with deep bows and numbered slips to fix their place in a queue of people eager to get their money back. It was a very orderly wake. "The customers don't get angry with us. We often even get their sympathy," said manager Noriaki Kohama. "But I've lost my job. I have no future now. I feel very angry and very sad."

He is furious with senior executives who hid massive losses from not only the public but their own staff. But he wants to see the mess through to the end: "There are still customers so we can still be loyal to something."

A vision of Japan as a stumbling shadow is alarming for the rest of the world PHOTO: MARCO PESARESI

In Brief

UNION BANK of Switzerland and Swiss Banking Corporation are to merge in a $60 billion deal to create the United Bank of Switzerland, the world's second biggest bank. It will cost 12,000 jobs and is expected to trigger a wave of European banking and insurance mergers.

AMERICA'S jobless rate sank to 4.6 per cent last month, a 24-year-low, giving further evidence that the US economic expansion is still going strong after more that seven years. In addition, 404,000 new jobs were created in November, nearly double the number forecast.

THE International Monetary Fund and South Korea agreed the world's biggest international financial bail-out, which will provide at least $55 billion for the wounded Asian tiger. In return, South Korea has agreed to reform its capital markets.

THE fragile economic recovery in Russia could be derailed unless it undertakes urgent economic and financial reform, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said.

CITY of London dealers will be handed a record $1.6 billion in bonuses this year. Their Christmas bonanza emerges after Chancellor Gordon Brown declared in his pre-Budget speech that wage restraint was vital to prevent a return to rising inflation and unemployment.

NATWEST Bank unveiled a double deal to rid it of the troublesome and loss-making NatWest Markets City banking arm. Its pan-European equities business has been sold to US-based Bankers Trust for $210 million, and the German Deutsche Morgan Grenfell group is buying its US and Asian derivatives operation for $80 million.

CHRIS EVANS, an ambitious young British broadcaster, has bought a controlling share in Richard Branson's Virgin Radio, the UK pop station on which he is the star breakfast presenter.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates December 8	Sterling rates December 1
Australia	2.4537-2.4570	2.4833-2.4859
Austria	20.72-20.74	21.06-21.07
Belgium	60.75-60.84	61.73-61.77
Canada	2.3426-2.3448	2.3976-2.3992
Denmark	11.21-11.21	11.39-11.40
France	9.85-9.86	10.01-10.02
Germany	2.9459-2.9483	2.9930-2.9947
Hong Kong	12.74-12.75	13.02-13.02
Ireland	1.1330-1.1331	1.1462-1.1471
Italy	2,883-2,887	2,929-2,933
Japan	215.01-215.28	217.64-217.84
Netherlands	3.3195-3.3228	3.3728-3.3751
New Zealand	2.7489-2.7538	2.7601-2.7641
Norway	11.90-11.91	12.21-12.21
Portugal	300.65-300.99	305.68-306.11
Spain	248.75-249.07	253.01-253.22
Sweden	12.85-12.87	13.14-13.15
Switzerland	2.3925-2.3956	2.4121-2.4145
USA	1.6474-1.6484	1.6842-1.6847
ECU	1.4862-1.4877	1.5091-1.5104

FTSE100 Share Index up 265.6 at 5157.4. FTSE 250 Index up 184.6 at 4761.0. Gold down $5.60 at [illegible].

Labour shakes up British savings plans

Michael White and Teresa Hunter

BRITAIN'S Treasury team went back to Labour basics last week when it announced a major shake-up of the nation's savings, aimed at handing new tax relief incentives to 6 million of Britain's poorer citizens — at the expense of tax-free nest eggs accumulated by middle-class savers.

The new Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) outlined by the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, was a classic exercise in the politics of redistribution, in line with what Tony Blair has repeatedly called measures "for the many, not the few".

Even as it pleased Labour backbenchers after weeks of controversy over the squeeze on the welfare state, it enraged up to 1 million better-off savers. They learned that a £50,000 ($83,000) cap is to be placed on the savings they can hold tax-free in the Tax Exempt Special Savings Accounts (Tessas) and Personal Equity Plans (Peps) they have built up since 1987.

The Treasury move also threw the mortgages of tens of thousands of homeowners into disarray, by removing the valuable tax-breaks of Pep-linked mortgages. Many will now be unable to repay their home loans.

Some lobby groups representing the lower paid were disappointed that the Government had failed to introduce more generous tax incentives, which are designed to persuade up to 6 million people with savings of £200 or less to acquire a financial cushion.

Mr Blair regards the scheme as a fair exercise in redistribution, part of Chancellor Gordon Brown's intention to tackle welfare reform.

The former Tory chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, and his successor as party spokesman, Peter Lilley, belittled Labour's claims to be helping the poorest. They accused the Chancellor of sanctioning a malicious "gimmick" which would simply penalise middle-class savers.

Main points

- An ISA will be a "one-stop account" to shelter cash, shares, bonds, unit and investment trusts, OEICs, life insurance, National Savings and deposits with credit unions from income and capital gains tax.
- ISAs will come into force in April 1999 and be available to anyone over the age of 18
- The ISA will have a £5,000 ($8,300) per year year cap and a £50,000 lifetime limit on contributions.
- There will be a six-month period during which Peps can be transferred into ISAs, but only up to the £50,000 limit.
- Existing Tessas can continue running until they mature when they can be rolled into an ISA. They will count towards the £50,000 limit.

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The School of Languages, which comprises Arabic, French, German, Russian and Spanish Sections, enjoys an enviable reputation for its teaching and research activities in discourse and translation/interpreting studies, applied languages studies and area studies (RAE rating 4 in 1996), and the successful applicant will have achieved prominence in both teaching and research in one of these fields.

Informal enquiries may be addressed to Prof. Ian Mason, School of Languages, tel: 0131 449 5111, ext. 4202, fax: 0131 451 3079, e-mail: I.Mason@hw.ac.uk

For an application form and further details please contact the Personnel Office, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, EH14 4AS, tel: 0131 451 3475 (24 hours), quoting Ref: 196/97/G. (Note: The Office will be closed from 23 December to 4 January). Closing date for applications: 30 January 1998.


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Informal enquiries are welcome to Professor John Swaffield, Head of Department, 0131 449 5111 ext 4643, e-mail J.A.Swaffield@hw.ac.uk.

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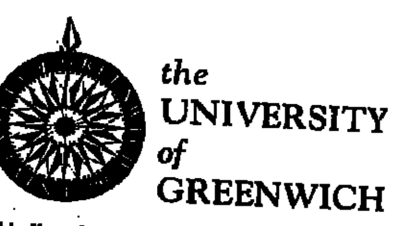
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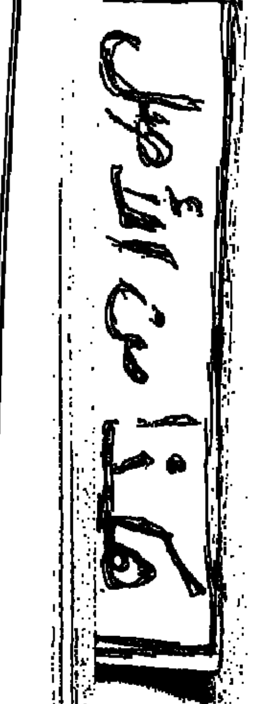
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New Zealand's first woman prime minister favours a no-nonsense approach, writes **Charlotte Denny**

Wellington boot on an iron foot

Iron lady . . . Shipley gained a Thatcherite reputation in the early nineties after piloting reforms that saw state benefits slashed and the minister burnt in effigy PHOTOGRAPH: FOTOPRESS

DOES mothering make you Machiavellian? Jenny Shipley, who this week became the first woman prime minister of New Zealand at the age of 45, says she learned all her political skills from bringing up her children. She was no doubt referring to being organised, determined and able to juggle competing priorities — the standard skills for a high-flying woman mixing motherhood and a career. But her attributes include a degree of low political cunning which makes one wonder about the challenge of raising the Shipley children.

As fellow MP Michael Laws once famously noted: "Frankly, if I wanted somebody to bring a human face to the Spanish Inquisition, I would have chosen Jenny. [She] can tell you in wonderful warm tones how she's going to garrotte you, then disembowel you and throw your intestines over her left shoulder . . . . She never raises her voice and never uses bad langunge, but the assault is deadly."

Others admire the way that Shipley dispatches opposition, preferring to call her "the perfumed steamroller". Her conservative politics and tough, no-nonsense approach have sparked the inevitable comparisons with Margaret Thatcher — Thatcherism without the human warmth, according to some. Shipley is said not to consider it a compliment.

She snatched the prime minister's job by organising a palace coup against her boss while he was halfway round the world last October. ("Knowledge is power, if you know it about the right person," she once said.) On his return from the Commonwealth leaders' summit in Edinburgh, the incumbent PM, Jim Bolger, learned she had lined up sufficient support to oust him.

Left alone in the library with the glass of whisky and the gun, Bolger did the decent thing and ended his own political life with a dignified resignation statement. After a last appearance on the international stage, at the recent Apec summit in Vancouver, followed by an official visit to China, he handed over to Shipley earlier this week.

The daughter of a Presbyterian minister, Jenny Robson was brought up in Gore, in the deep south of the South Island. She trained as a teacher and after a stint in a rural school, married a farmer from the provincial town of Ashburton.

Her political journey began when, while bringing up their children (Anna, aged 19, and Ben, aged 17), she became involved with her local Plunkett centre. The centres are a New Zealand innovation, a network of community nurses who advise mothers with new babies on everything from feeding to fevers. (Ironically, in the government's cost-cutting programme, funding for the voluntary organisation that provides the nurses' salaries has been cut and Plunkett nurses are now a rarity.)

When her children grew older, Shipley turned her organisational talents to the Playcentre movement — community crèches run by parents which provide free childcare and support. Plunkett and Playcentre politics led her to become a local councillor, and her political skills drew her to the attention of her constituency MP, Ruth Richardson, then opposition finance spokeswoman.

Encouraged by Richardson, Shipley won a seat in the New Zealand parliament in 1987 for the conservative, rural-based National party. She quickly gained a reputation as a good parliamentary performer and when National came to power in 1990, she joined the cabinet in the high-profile social welfare portfolio. One senior civil servant panicked: "We have a danger in our midst. She actually understands what she's talking about."

Under the influence of Richardson's brand of rightwing economics (dubbed Ruthanasia by the electorate), the new administration set about reducing public spending to cut the government deficit. Shipley's role, in charge of the social security budget, was to slash the benefits given to some of New Zealand's poorest families.

Her iron determination to see through this cuts programme in the face of protests from both ends of the political spectrum earned her a reputation as a tough politician. She was burnt in effigy — and her popularity sank to an all-time low.

New Zealand may have been the first country in the world to give women the vote, in 1893, but parliamentary politics has been characterised by a macho, knockabout style. Shipley's rise has coincided with a sea-change in that culture: today's MPs are a more sober lot, more likely to go home to their families than stay up all hours drinking with journalists.

Both main parties are now led by women, and commentators say this growing band is partly behind the change — 29.2 per cent of New Zealand MPs are women, compared with 18.2 per cent in Britain.

After two years in the social welfare portfolio, Shipley became minister of health, in charge of implementing another unpopular reform programme: introducing internal markets in the health sector. New Zealand's health service, which was set up in the 1930s by the first Labour government and became the model for the British National Health Service, inspires a similar degree of public loyalty as its UK counterpart.

Shipley has had to take the rap for the public perception that the reforms were a bureaucratic nightmare which failed to solve the funding crisis or the lengthening waiting lists.

After National succeeded in holding on to power in last year's election, Shipley was moved to the less controversial transport portfolio — at her own request — in an attempt to repair her public image. She is trying to overcome her Thatcherite reputation — a hard task with a public who have not forgotten the benefit cuts.

She recently inherited the post of minister for women's affairs . . . by virtue of being the only woman in the cabinet. Her achievements in the post include cutting the prescription charge on the contraceptive pill and toughening up New Zealand's laws on domestic violence.

There is no doubt that Shipley is an impressive politician who boasts a formidably loyal team. While she takes a rightwing line on economics, she is liberal on social issues, such as abortion and gay rights, and, unlike Thatcher, is not hostile to female politicians. It is widely thought that, when she announces her cabinet line-up, she will make a point of encouraging other women to follow in the path of the "perfumed steamroller".

Arms campaigners enter political minefield

OPINION
John Ryle

I FIRST met Rae McGrath, the buccaneering founder of the Mines Advisory Group, in 1992, inspecting minefields in the ruins of Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. The following year, in Montreux, he and I were among those who attended a conference organised by the ICRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, to bring together the pioneers in the campaign against anti-personnel mines.

In the five years since then there have been a hundred more conferences, seminars and committee meetings. In that time Rae and the other founders of the landmine campaign, most of them present at Montreux (Jody Williams and Bobby Muller of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Steve Goose and Ken Anderson of Human Rights Watch and Comelio Sommaruga of the IRC, among others), have taken the mines issue from the killing fields of the Third World to the negotiating tables of the international legal system. Thanks to them everyone is now aware of the evil of mines. Thanks to them the process of ridding the world of them has begun.

Last week I saw Rae, between television interviews, at the culmination of those meetings: the signing of the Landmine Ban Treaty in Ottawa. The treaty is a slender document, 16 pages long; it's short but sweet, free of the caveats and exceptions that frequently spatchcock arms control legislation.

It has been negotiated in what, in the glacially slow world of arms control, is an unprecedentedly short time. And it has already been signed by 121 states, two thirds of the countries in the world. But Rae and many other campaigners are still not happy. And they are right.

On paper the landmines treaty is a remarkable achievement. It's the first time that a weapon in common use has been withdrawn from the arsenal. It's also the first time that the manufacture, possession, transfer and use of an armament have been banned in a single, unambiguous piece of legislation. The relentless pressure of the campaigners kept the treaty free of loopholes; the diligence of a few governments — notably Canada, Belgium and Norway — pushed it through. But this is where the problems start. Signing a treaty is one thing, but no treaty is legally effective until it is ratified. Forty countries have to ratify any treaty for it to enter into force.

A six-month wait follows. Only then does it become legally binding. Ten- or 20-year delays in ratification are not uncommon in international agreements. To get all the countries that signed in Ottawa to ratify the landmine treaty could take a long time. In that time deployment may increase, stockpiles may grow and injuries from landmines continue to rise.

Then there are the hold-outs. The United States, China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Israel and Finland, among others, have declined to put their signature to the treaty. The first five are historically the world's biggest mine manufacturers. Some, like Russia, have said they will sign, but not yet. Others, like the US, demanded exceptions for certain potential theatres of war and certain kinds of mine, which the negotiators of the treaty rightly refused.

Then there is the further problem that most current landmine use occurs in internal conflicts, in civil wars where at least one party is not a government. Getting such non-state actors to respect the ban poses a novel difficulty which the system of international legislation is ill-equipped to deal with.

Ensuring compliance among those who sign and ratify could be a problem too. If Saddam Hussein can evade UN inspection of chemical and biological weapons facilities, how much easier will it be for illegal landmine assembly to take place, with or without the connivance of governments? Landmines are simple technology; simpler to make than CDs; their components as easy to transport as narcotics. Without universal agreement and an organisation with global reach to monitor the treaty, landmine production and use could continue even if every country in the world signed the treaty.

None of this detracts from its importance. Landmines have now been comprehensively stigmatised; a new kind of fast-track arms control process has begun. The campaign has also drawn attention to the wider problem of the global spread of so-called small arms — the arms that currently feed wars in dozens of the unlucky countries of the world. Anything that raises the curtain on this vast and nefarious trade, which implicates every Western country, is to be welcomed. The landmines campaign cannot rest.

The Ottawa Treaty is not the end but the beginning — the beginning of the reassertion by civil society of control over the wickedness of the arms industry.

© John Ryle

John Ryle is a director of the Landmines Project of the Open Society Institute. E-mail: john.ryle@ibm.com

A music technology war looms again. Do consumers stand a chance, ask **Simon Beavis** and **Chris Barrie**

Casualties of the hi-fi wars

YOU'VE spent weeks studying the specialist press, every consumer magazine in sight, and are about to take the plunge and buy that new hi-fi system. You want a high-quality CD player, of course; you need a cassette recorder to make tapes for the car and personal stereo; and a deck, an optional extra last time you bought a system, is now definitely worth having since you rediscovered vinyl. You are prepared to pay, if you can be sure you are getting the right package.

Then the inevitable happens. The news breaks that the world of consumer electronics, which you have taken such an effort to keep up with, is about to leave you behind again.

Last week Philips and Sony announced in Japan that they have come up with a new standard for digitally recorded music: the Super Audio CD, which will only give you its full benefit if you buy a new type of player. Meanwhile you may have seen Philips advertising its new CD recording system, designed to let you make your own compilations. Again, to get the full benefit, you will need to shell out £500 ($850) on the hardware. You will also find that Digital Video Disc is coming, promising better quality sound and vision and up to a 17-fold increase in storage capacity.

As usual, all the new technologies promise to make listening to music and watching video more complete than ever before. They also threaten to consign at least part, if not all, of today's hi-fi systems to the rubbish heap. For every expensive marketing drive pushing the new products will carry the subliminal message that, without the latest equipment, you might as well sit in the dark and listen to the rain tapping on the windows.

Much of the advance in hi-fi equipment stems from the rapid progress being made in computer hardware and software. The computer market provides an apt precedent for consumers who fear that their expensively purchased hi-fi equipment will be out of date all too quickly. Computers, after all, are out of date as soon as they have left the shop.

That fear strikes particularly hard among British buyers for two reasons, according to Jez Ford, editor of What Hi-Fi? magazine. First, the British were particularly badly stung by an earlier format war, when VHS took on Betamax for dominance of the video market. VHS, of course, was the winner after a protracted struggle — leaving hundreds of thousands of video owners with a wasting asset now usually found only at car boot sales.

Second, Ford says, the British want value for money above all else. The Americans are prepared to pay whatever it takes to get the best, and the Japanese are ready to buy the latest even if unproven, but the British are looking to make every hard-earned pound count.

The consumer's bewilderment can only increase as the realisation dawns that music does not have to be bought from shops. The Internet offers new opportunities: you can download albums even before they are officially released in Britain thanks to the lawlessness of cyberspace.

The CD itself has until now proved a relatively stable format. Introduced in 1982 when it was promoted as a wondrous advance over vinyl, the CD has imposed its own limits on musical reproduction. Since then computer — or, rather, digital — technology has moved on. Hence the new products now surging out of the labs. But the trick for the manufacturers is not how to develop new technologies, but how to convince the public that they are worth buying in large numbers. For only mass production can lower the unit cost and give the format the supremacy that it needs to make real money.

One way of cutting consumer scepticism is to ensure that the CD players of today will be able to play the CDs of tomorrow. If you want the improved quality that the new format of CD offers, you will have to buy a new player — but the new discs will still work on the players already bought.

Yet consumers are not quite the hopeless cases they sometimes appear. Look at the march of the CD. It has certainly hit the market for vinyl — but has left the cassette market stronger. Some 225 million new CD players are sold around the world each year, and around 1.3 billion compact discs. But 250 million cassette players are sold each year and some 2.5 billion tapes. Of those tapes sold, 1.5 billion are blank, according to Philips.

No wonder Philips, Sony and the other hardware makers have their sights set on the massive untapped potential of recording on CD. And inevitably the record companies are already adapting to the new market. Music buyers are increasingly complaining that many new albums are no longer available on cassette. The proportion of new albums on cassette in 1989 was 65 per cent; but in 1996 this had slumped to 23 per cent.

But all this does not explain why Sony and Philips have developed a CD that, in sound quality, apes vinyl. The new Digital Audio Discs (or Super Audio CDs) will reproduce the strengths of analogue LPs on disc. The equipment will be expensive initially, and is expected to gain mass-market appeal only when the software providers — in this case the record labels — put their money behind the new format.

The mechanical complexity of the average record player has hastened the death of vinyl. Jez Ford says a £300 record deck will produce better sound than a £300 CD player. But for most people paying less than that, CDs are a better option. The reason lies in the technologies. He likens a piece of music to a coastline. The deeper the nooks and crannies, of the coastline the better. A CD player will skirt round the edge of the coastline very efficiently, and will do so even when covered in dust or jam. But vinyl maps all those nooks and crannies and, matched to a sophisticated pick-up, takes the listener around them.

Jack Dinsdale, a professor at the University of Abertay, Dundee, goes further. Vinyl, he says, distorts sound when it is loudest, but the CD distorts when it is quietest. Quoting the violinist Isaac Stern, who said silences sounded wrong on CD, Dinsdale believes CDs "win hands-down in every way except the quality of the sound". He says the frequency range of conventional CDs cuts off above about 22KHz, whereas orchestral sounds range much higher, as high as 40KHz or more. The best vinyl recordings will range as high as 35KHz. Although adults cannot consciously hear notes at that range, their existence is important to the musical experience and affects the perception of what one hears.

For this reason the arrival of a new CD that combines the advantages of the digital format with vinyl could be a great success. However, this week in New York the equipment manufacturers are due to demonstrate rival formats for the new technology. Everyone has the VHS/Betamax fiasco scored on their memories. The last thing they want is a format war which confuses consumers and persuades them to keep their pounds in their savings accounts.

Industry executives believe a compromise can be found and a new standard agreed that will allow Philips, Sony, Matsushita, Pioneer and other big names to profit from the new digital marketplace. History should tell the consumer that the best policy is to wait and see.

Research: Mark Espiner, Jane Crinnion

How CDs took over

Value of album sales in 1996

LPs	[illegible]
Cassettes	[illegible]
CDs	£789,119,000

Total [illegible]

The conventional CD player

The silvery reflective surface of a CD carries the signal information in the form of "pits", etched into the reflective layer. The laser beam is focused on the line of pits and a reflected signal is received from the flat parts between them. The pits in the disc disperse the beam and no signal is reflected back. This creates a stream

Laser beam is focused on to disc

Tracking control

Laser generator

Tracking arm

Cylindrical laser crystal

New wave music

[illegible] became available in 1982, when the audio [illegible] agreed on common standards. Conventional CDs have no [illegible] information is permanently stamped on to the [illegible] reflecting layer.

What you are buying

Candle in the wind '97 - Elton John, 1997 single

CD	61.7%
Cassette	38.3%
Vinyl	[illegible]

Pop - U2 1997 album

CD	82%
Cassette	[illegible]
Vinyl	[illegible]

The CD revolution

UK trade deliveries, millions of units

LPs, Cassettes, CDs; 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96

The CD audio recorder

[illegible] two new types [illegible] to be recorded on a new [illegible]. One, the CD-Recordable disc (CD-R, top right), allows you to make a permanent recording. The other, the CD-ReWritable disc (CD-RW, bottom right), lets you record and re-record several hundred times. These have an additional area near the centre hole which can store data.

With CD R, digital information is written on to the disc by forming pits in the recording layer. The laser heats the disc to 250C and the recording layer melts, a pit pattern corresponding to that on a conventional CD is produced. This pattern contains the digital signal.

With CD-RW, the recording layer is made of a crystalline alloy of silver, indium, antimony and tellurium. During recording, the laser heats tiny parts of the recording track to 500-700C. The heated areas melt into non-crystalline pits, which have much lower reflectance than the remaining crystalline areas. This difference in reflectance allows the recorded data to be read. The recording is erased by turning the non-crystalline pits back to their original state, by heating them to 200C for about 37 minutes. CD-RW can only be played on certain machines.

A partially recorded CD-R disc

Program calibration area (calibrates the laser through a brief trial recording)

Centre hole

Program memory area (contains track numbers and start/stop points)

Lead-in

Recording area

Lead-out track

Unrecorded area

A rewritable CD-RW

Protective layer

Reflection layer

Recording layer (where pits are burned)

Pregroove

Substrate

The Digital Video Disc

Standard compact disc · Digital Video Disc

1.6 μm spacing

0.74 μm spacing

In 1995, Sony and nine other companies agreed on a new format for video and audio, DVD. The DVD is the same size as the CD (120mm diameter and 1.2mm thick) but holds seven times the data — 4.7 gigabytes per single side, compared with 680 megabytes for CD. It does this by using smaller pits, a more closely spaced track and a shorter wavelength laser with a more tightly focused beam. The new DVD players can play conventional CDs.

The Super Audio CD

Now Philips and Sony have jointly developed a new way of storing digital data on a "Super Audio CD", which is of far better sound quality than a conventional CD. The Super Audio CD is a refinement of the Digital Video Disc. Whereas the DVD is designed to carry video, audio and computer data, the Super Audio CD carries only audio. As a DVD, it can carry far more data than a CD. It has two layers: one can carry a stereo recording for use with a conventional CD; the other can also carry six further channels of sound. The extra data can reproduce a performance more accurately than previously. You will be able to play the new discs on a conventional player, but will not hear the increased frequency range.

GRAPHICS: FINBARR SHEEHY; STEVE VILLIERS

Letter from Melbourne John Walsh

Lessons in citizenship

THERE is a story told of post-war immigrants arriving in Australia from Europe that is supposed to illustrate the characters of the mainland state capitals. Their ship arrives first in Perth, Western Australia, and the passengers are greeted with the invitation, "Have a beer!" Some leave the ship and settle in Perth; others continue on the passage. The next port of call is Adelaide, where they are asked, "What church do you belong to?" Then to Melbourne, where the question is "What school did you go to?" On to Sydney, where they are asked, "How much money have you got?" And finally to Brisbane, where they are urged, "Have a beer!"

Like most such stories, it contains a grain of truth: Adelaide is often called the city of churches, and Brisbane and Perth share a relaxed atmosphere that is less evident in Melbourne and Sydney. The old school tie does come up in Melbourne from time to time — for example in a parliamentary exchange when the leader of the opposition accused the (male) prime minister of having spent his formative years wearing a skirt (he went to Scotch College, where the boys wear kilts). This may tell us something about the Melbourne establishment (not to mention the calibre of our politicians), but it is not the whole story.

A few weeks ago, I became an Australian citizen. The citizenship ceremony was at the local town hall, and I had expected it to be a fairly dull affair. In fact, it was fascinating, largely because of the diversity of the new Australians: 146 people born in more than 40 different countries. Every region of the world, and certainly every continent appeared to be represented: there were Greeks, Italians and Bosnians; Turks, Egyptians and South Africans; Indians, Vietnamese and Filipinos; Canadians, Brazilians and Bolivians.

After swearing an oath of allegiance (I elected for oath No 2, which was secular, others elected for oath No 1, taken on the Bible, whereas the Bosnian couple next to me were unsure and took both), we were called to the stage one by one to shake the hand of the mayor and receive a citizenship certificate.

The hardest job of the night was the roll call — the deputy mayor struggled manfully with his pronunciation as Iranian names succeeded Cambodian, and German followed Chinese. Nobody begrudged him an audible sigh of relief whenever an Anglo-Saxon or Irish name came up. As the ceremony closed, we sang "Waltzing Matilda". I faltered at the line "Up jumped a jumbuck to drink at the billabong", feeling embarrassed as a new Australian not to know what a jumbuck was. Later, however, my Australian born-and-bred fiancée confessed to similar ignorance.

The ceremony coincided with the latest pronouncements in the press by that least multicultural of all Australians, Pauline Hanson. The rise of Ms Hanson and her paradoxically named One Nation party has been the least appetising feature of recent Australian politics. .

Her inflammatory tone (focusing on Asian immigration and investment, and allegedly preferential treatment of Aboriginals) clearly strikes a chord with some of the electorate, who look back nostalgically to the White Australia immigration policy of the post-war years.

Hanson uses "multicultural" as a dirty word, a government policy designed to subjugate the Australia to foreign (read Asian) powers. But in this city, it just seems a descriptive term. On Saturdays, I often go to the Victoria Market, in the heart of Melbourne. I walk past Italian shoe stalls and Asian greengrocers to the delicatessen section, where I buy chorizo from Spanish butchers, sun-dried tomatoes from Italians, falafel and hoummus from Lebanese grocers. Afterwards, I might drive to nearby Richmond for Vietnamese yum cha.

On a national level, Australia cannot boast about its race relations record, given the faltering process of reconciliation with indigenous Australians, and the forcible assimilation of Aboriginal children in the recent past. But in urban Australia, and at any rate in Melbourne, multiculturalism appears so established in the life of the city as to render Hanson and her mob irrelevant. And for that, as I sip a *caffe latte*, this immigrant is most thankful.

A jumbuck, by the way, as Pauline Hanson could probably tell you, is a young male sheep.



Prophetic words . . . A statement inscribed in a medieval Catholic Book of Hours is likely to boost its value to as much as £300,000 if the owner, a European collector, decides to sell the unique tome. Anne Boleyn, the second wife of Henry VIII, wrote "Le temps viendra" ("The time will come") under a miniature painting of Judgment Day. Anne died on the scaffold after Henry had her tried on an invented charge of adultery and incest. Henry and Anne's only child became Elizabeth I PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

A Country Diary

Elizabeth Jones

BERMUDA: The morning is all sapphires and diamonds, a morning for watching the longtails. I take the car and nip over to Astwood Park on the South Shore. Once there, I walk along the cliff path, through the cedar and casurina trees until I have a view of the jagged coast line, the Atlantic Ocean and the inner reef, dark and shadowy beneath the blue-green of the water.

At first the sky is empty. But then I can just make out a flash of white separate from the whiteness of the waves breaking on the reef. It rises into the air and then swoops towards the cliff, the black markings on the wings and the sleek tail clearly identifiable now. Seconds later, its mate follows and together they tilt and swerve along the coast in aerial dance. For half an hour I watch them plunge and soar, their curved wings hammering the air, their twin tail feathers bending gracefully into the breeze. Finally, one flies straight towards me and I can see quite clearly the bright orange of its bill. It hovers for a second, then lands precariously on the side of the cliff before disappearing into a crevice. I wish I could follow, but the cliff is so precipitous, there's no chance. I would love to see a newly hatched chick with its covering of fluffy down.

Though these tropic birds are here for just eight months of the year, we have claimed them as our own. Almost a Bermudan emblem, they decorate our pottery, our glass and our jewellery. As I look at the single gold longtail that hangs round my neck, it occurs to me that it is a mockery compared with the elegant vibrancy of that flying courtship.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***I HAVE* heard that urine is sterile. How can this be — I thought urine served to rid the body of toxins?**

THE terms sterile (containing no living organisms) and toxic (poisonous) are unrelated. A substance could be sterile and toxic (eg, cyanide) or non-sterile and non-toxic (eg, yoghurt). Urine is normally sterile when produced in the kidney and stored in the bladder, but is likely to become non-sterile as it leaves the body. Urine is non-toxic, although it contains urea and other substances which can be toxic if they are not excreted and reach high concentrations in the body. — *Ken Joy, Kenilworth, Warwickshire*

NOT ONLY is urine sterile, but it is a valuable physiological substance. As blood travels through the body it passes through the liver and the kidneys. One of the liver's major functions is to detoxify the blood. The kidneys balance the various elements in your blood, extracting excess amounts of vital substances and water in the form of urine.

Urine contains vitamins, minerals, proteins, enzymes, hormones, antibodies and amino acids. This forms the basis of urine therapy, which is simply "recycling" urine by drinking it. Practitioners claim that it has cured, amongst many others, constipation, psoriasis, eczema, endometriosis, rheumatism, allergies and even some cancers.

I have drunk over a pint of urine daily for seven years and can vouch for its efficacy. — *Clive Barker, Thornham, Rochdale*

***ARE* human beings the only animals that keep pets?**

ANIMALS do have pets. First, consider Koko the gorilla, who was heartbroken when her pet cat, All Ball, was run over. California schoolchildren drew pictures of cats for her and a cat breeder donated a ginger kitten. Koko is shown giving the kitten a bottle and playing delightedly with her new pet on the back page of National Geographic in June 1985.

Second, my mother once watched a favourite Irish water spaniel drop a live domestic duckling into our pond, clamber down the steps and swim after the duckling to retrieve it. The dog climbed back up the steps, dropped the duckling in again and retrieved it a second time. The game continued until my mother took pity on the duckling, rescued it from the dog and returned it, unharmed, to the farm nearby from where the dog had stolen it. The dog had carried the duckling home in his mouth to practise retrieving before the duck season began again on the New Jersey tidal marsh. — *Joan Clough, Munich, Germany*

MY NEIGHBOUR, a black-and-white spaniel, keeps two elderly humans. They respond to its every bark. — *Colin Bray, Brussels, Belgium*

***WHAT* is the origin of the rhythm, "Rum Tiddley-um tum. Pom! Pom!"?**

MY BEST guess is that this rhythm is the first-half of the opening phrase of the side-drum accompaniment to "The British Grenadiers", from the downbeat. — *Robert Tzopa, Ottawa, Canada*

THIS musical catchphrase began as a satire upon Italianate recitative declamation, and commemorates the astonishment and contempt felt by true-blue Englishmen over the introduction of Italian opera to London theatres by Handel and Bononcini, with casts of (imported) temperamental sopranos and castrati. It caricatures the seemingly invariable recitative ending in Italian opera — which sounded most unidiomatic to English ears. Italian opera, an "exotic and irrational entertainment" as Dr Johnson called it, enjoyed a short-lived vogue in London in the 1720s and 1730s, but was mercilessly parodied. — *Robert Lindsay, Waverley, NSW, Australia*

Any answers?

***IS THERE* any truth in the story that a British officer in the first world war would not allow his troops to wear helmets because he thought they were "sissy"? —** *R Greenaway, Dunmow, Essex*

***IN 1984* a High Court ruling meant that the last mortal remains of Edward the Martyr, King of England, were deposited in a branch of the Midland Bank in Croydon. Are they still there, and why? —** *Brian Robinson, Brentwood, Essex*

***WHERE* does the expression "going haywire" come from? —** *Jane Al-Attar, Manchester*

***I HAVE* been given various baggage tickets at airport check-ins, all of which state specifically "This is not the luggage ticket (baggage check) described by Article 4 of the Warsaw Convention". Is it likely that I will ever receive the real thing? —** *Steve Kelly, Vines Cross, East Sussex*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Turned out nice again

THEATRE
Michael Billington

WE HOLIDAY in France. We drink French wine. We watch French movies. Yet we remain oddly ignorant of that nation's theatre: we associate it, unfairly, with rhetoric and bombast. But the French Theatre Season has both opened our eyes and been a box-office hit; and it ends strongly with Peter Brook's production of Beckett's **Oh Les Beaux Jours** at the Glasgow Tramway and with the long-overdue British premiere of Bernard-Marie Koltes's Roberto Zucco at Stratford's Other Place.

Beckett and Brook: they seem made for each other. The one a master of minimalism, the other engaged on a permanent quest for the essence of theatre. But what can Brook bring to Beckett's study of entombment? The story of Winnie, buried up to her waist and then her neck in earth, seems as confining for the director as for the performer.

In fact, Brook's production is subtly different from recent British versions. Most obviously, it's played in French, which gives it a wholly different rhythm. What I noticed, more than ever before, is that this is a play about time, in which Winnie (Natasha Parry) paces her day with exquisite care in order to cheat her impossible fate. In particular, the two words "Et maintenant?" chime through the text like a musical refrain, marking the stages of Winnie's growing desperation and acquiring a much greater resonance than a simple "And now?"

In French, in short, it becomes a different play. At times I miss the Irish jauntiness that Rosaleen Linehan brought to the role in the Dublin Gate revival. But the puns work better: when Winnie spots the eggs of an ant ("Une fourmi") in the sand, her husband, Willie (Jean-Claude Perrin), delightedly cries: "Formication!"

Brook's production also reminds us that Winnie constantly deploys the French delight in reason in a totally irrational situation. "De la mesure en toute chose," cries Winnie — "Everything within reason" — but her tragedy is that logic and order are unavailing against her creeping paralysis.



Sand by me . . . Natasha Parry and Jean-Claude Perrin in Beckett's Oh Les Beaux Jours PHOTO: NEIL LIBBERT

Brook's production is musically phrased and emotionally exact: it is pitched almost perfectly between ironic optimism and existential despair. As Brook brilliantly says in The Empty Space, Beckett "forges his merciless 'no' out of a longing for 'yes', and so his despair is the negative from which the contour of its opposite can be drawn."

But the play belongs more to its performer than to its director, and Parry movingly presents us with a refined, cultivated woman using decorum as a means of keeping chaos at bay. She views everything, from her toothbrush handle to the crawling ant, with a microscopic curiosity, as if determined to preserve her standards. Most memorable is the pained, eyelid-lowered look she finally gives to her hopelessly out-of-reach husband: a sharp reminder of Beckett's obsession with the solitude and companionship of marriage.

Brook's production coincides with a season of his films at the French Institute in London: a salutary reminder that his first ambition was to be a movie director and that his films are a vital adjunct to his stage work. His genius may lie in theatre, but he brings to the cinema the same preoccupations (cruelty, violence and madness) and the same hatred of otiose decoration. As he says of one of his best films, Moderato Cantabile, "the camera has to have an emotional reason to move" — a lesson that might be learnt by some of today's frenzied film-makers.

But Brook remains a pragmatist. When I asked him why in recent years France had not produced so much new drama as Britain, he suggested it was to do with the French obsession with linguistic purity. One writer who triumphed over that concern, however, was Bernard-Marie Koltes, who died of Aids in 1989 just after completing his final play, **Roberto Zucco**. Performed all over Europe, it now gets its British premiere in a fine production by James Macdonald at Stratford-on-Avon's Other Place.

Koltes's world is closer to Genet's than Beckett's. This particular play is a haunting study of an escaped murderer who, in the course of 15 short scenes, is driven to serial killing. On one level the play, in the tradition of Genet and Mailer, sees the criminal as a symbol of the outlawed artist: on another, it offers a critique of an amoral society in which a brother sells his sister into prostitution and the police routinely brutalise witnesses.

Koltes does not glamorise the killer; he uses him as a source of moral inquiry. And Martin Crimp's translation, Macdonald's production and Jeremy Herbert's design do everything to implicate us in the events. The action is presented on a lateral strip of stage with the audience on two sides. The accents are diversely regional. And when Zubin Varla's Zucco takes a woman prisoner in a park, there is little to separate us from the voyeuristic onlookers. It is a deeply unnerving play, one that offers a series of snapshots of urban desolation. It also deals in questions rather than answers. What makes men kill? Do we mythologise the criminal? Is it nature or society that breeds these hard hearts? Koltes offers no solutions. But the questions he poses about the human condition are the ones that have preoccupied Peter Brook for the past 35 years. Drama, in their hands, becomes not a means of escape but the ultimate form of moral investigation.

Try harder and softer

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

DIMPLES! Don't talk to me about dimples! We used squares of the Oswaldtwistle Bugle, tied wi' a bit o' string, when I wor a lad. They gave you summat to read in the WC, nourished an early interest in newspapers and taught you the transitory nature of fame.

Hale and Pace ended the entertaining series **Jobs for the Boys** (BBC1) with an advertising campaign for Dixcel Kitten Soft Toilet Tissue. As opposed, of course, to Andrex Puppy Soft Toilet Tissue. Not being the market leader, Dixcel have to try harder or, in their case, softer. They hope to do this with the Dixcel dimples, which Norman Pace in his innocence called the bumpy bits.

As Hale and Pace are notorious for microwaving kittens, it was an assignment which seemed to lower their spirits. Pace said sombrely, "I feel I am looking down a dark tunnel." The boys had struck bottom. They did, however, pick up fascinating facts along the way. Did you know that Americans scrunch their loo paper while the British fold or wrap it?

Instinctively, they struck an irreverent note which, they were told, was more suitable for beer. "Clients", warned Sir Tim Bell, "are always very frightened of humour." A bit of a blow to a couple of comics.

The comic actor and director Mel Smith recoiled when told the clients insisted on having a toddler in the ad. "Their minds wander and they want to go for a wee." The toddlers, I suppose, not the clients.

Norman Pace ruthlessly dragooned his children into a promotional video. Holly played the bossy sister with brio. Charlie was wrapped from head to toe in toilet paper.

The moment the idea was approved, everybody else put their oar in. The girl must not be too bossy. The boy's mouth must not be covered. Terence Donovan gave them a piece of advice which tickles my fancy: "A little bitta madness doesn't go amiss." I like that.

I, Caesar (BBC2) has reached the most colourful lad of the lot. Oo, Nero was awful, but you like him.

He is more memorable than much better men. Mel Brooks wrote a long monologue about him in The Producers. "You're going to jump on me! I know you're going to jump on me like Nero jumped on Poppaea! He jumped up and down, up and down until he squeezed her like a bug. Please don't jump on me!" Mel Brooks learned his craft writing jokes for Sid Caesar. No relation, as far as I know.

There is much to be said for crocodiles. Well, two things actually. They are devoted mothers, carrying their young in their own mouth, the tails dangling like spaghetti, and they queue very patiently for their food. Which makes them sound quite British.

The exceptional thing about this **Wildlife Special** (BBC1) was the infrared photography. We saw the crocodile when she thought we couldn't: taking her brood from a drying waterhole to fresh water (they followed like ducklings, making rubbed-balloon, wait-for-me noises) or driving the fish towards the shore by swinging the scaly horror of her folded tail (not me, Milton).

Let's hear it for the intrepid cameraman, Richard Kirby. Or Stumpy, as he is known in the trade.

Candid observer of human behaviour

Gillian Wearing, a video artist, topped an all-female shortlist to win the Turner Prize. **Dan Glaister** reports

FOR the second consecutive year, Britain's £20,000 Turner Prize has been awarded to a video artist.

The prize was presented to Gillian Wearing by the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, at the Tate Gallery in London. Her victory over the three other women on the prize's first all-woman shortlist confirms the dominance of Goldsmiths College in the much talked-about contemporary British art scene.

Ms Wearing, aged 34, works in confessional video. Her most acclaimed pieces include adults lip-synching to the voices of their children, and Confess All On Video, in which people were filmed talking about their secrets with the guarantee of anonymity.

The Turner Prize jury praised "the emotional force of her work and its complexity beneath an apparently simple surface". They also praised "the way in which she has broadened both her working method and her subject matter, consistently producing unexpected insights into human behaviour".

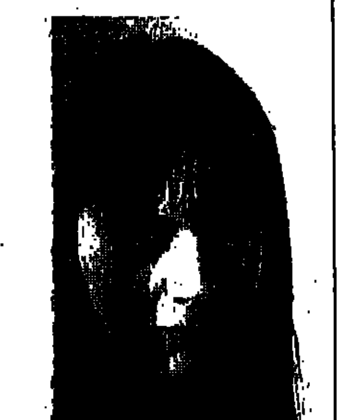
Ms Wearing, who was born in Birmingham in 1963, studied at Chelsea School of Art before taking a BA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, London, which also produced Damien Hirst and many of the more prominent names in the world of the "YBAs" — the Young British Artists.

For the Turner Prize exhibition, she has two pieces: 60 Minutes Silence and Sacha And Mum. The former shows 26 people dressed in police uniform, held in what appears to be a group photograph. Movements indicate, however, that it is a video, not a photograph. Sacha And Mum depicts a tense relationship, played by actors, in which a mother and daughter embrace and struggle with each other. But Wearing choreographs their movements and the film is projected backwards.

***Adrian Searle comments:* If we consider Gillian Wearing's achievements, the work she's made in the last 12 months can be extremely funny. Her recent work is very staged and very theatrical. I think she would like to be interesting but it is often little more than entertaining.**

She seems to see her work as almost entirely about documentary which shows the documentary-maker as much as the subject. I'm not sure how responsible her relationship to her subjects is.

While her work is on the margins of Esther Rantzen and That's Life, all of the shortlisted artists flirt with games other than art. A lot of what the four artists do operates on the margins of what is traditionally called artistic practice. This has served to make the all-woman Turner Prize one of the most interesting but least satisfying shows, but I don't believe we're talking about the best art of the year.



Wearing: 'emotional force of her work' impressed jury members

Triumph of the little people

CINEMA
Richard Williams

INTERTEXTUALITY is everywhere these days, but rarely in so benign a form as it appears in **The Borrowers**, a cinematic adaptation of the post-war series of popular children's novels by the British writer Mary Norton.

When the villainous lawyer Ocious P Potter (a grossly malevolent John Goodman) celebrates the apparent success of his plan to steal and demolish an innocent family's house and to build a block of luxury flats on the site, he glimpses his destiny. "Today, Potter Apartments," he crows. "Tomorrow, Pottersville!" Cinéastes will recognise the reference to Frank Capra's It's A Wonderful Life, one of the best-loved of all family films, in which the name Pottersville is used as a byword for the triumph of selfishness and greed. And, by a happy coincidence, Capra's classic has just been re-released in a new print.

What the two films have in common is their use of property as the battleground in the struggle between good and evil. In It's A Wonderful Life, George Bailey's savings and loan company enables ordinary people to buy their own homes on benevolent credit terms, thus arousing the wrath of Henry Potter, who plots to ruin him. The Borrowers examines not only the plight of the parents and children cheated out of their home by Ocious Potter but also, by implication, the rights of the tiny family living under the floorboards, who exist by means of temporarily and unobtrusively appropriating their hosts' assets.

A British production, directed by Peter Hewitt, The Borrowers resembles the sort of thing that might have happened had Tim Burton ever got his hands on a script by yet another Potter, Dennis. It blends old with new, irony with sincerity, and plain with fancy in such a way as to give postmodernism a good name and to entertain an audience of all ages.

The life-size family, Joe and Victoria Lender (Aden Gillett and Doon MacKichan) and their 10-year-old son Pete (Bradley Pierce), exist in a world surrealistically combining the English suburb with the American high-rise downtown, as if the towers of Chicago had been relocated in Orpington. On the street, all the cars are Morris Minors (a stretch-limo version for Ocious Potter, who also uses a gold cellular phone).

Beneath the Lenders' floorboards, the tiny Pod and Homily Clock (Jim Broadbent and Celia Imrie), and their children Arrietty and Peagreen (Flora Newbegin and Tom Felton), are threatened by Potter's takeover. Hewitt's special effects team work miracles in reconciling the contrasting scales of Lenders and Clocks: the tiny figures haul themselves up coffee mugs and dodge behind mantelpiece ornaments with persuasive alacrity.

When the children are separated from their parents, Arietty teams up with a charismatic rebel borrower (Raymond Pickard), who takes her for a spin in his rocket car and sets up the elaborately staged conclusion to a thoroughly successful entertainment.

This is turning out to be the season for films dedicated to exploring the corners of Provence that tourists never see. After Sandrine Veysset's deceptively bleak Will It Snow For Christmas?, located on remote farmland outside Avignon, Robert Guédiguian's **Marius et Jeannette** focuses on life among the inhabitants of L'Estaque, a patch of land northwest of Marseille. If you're driving from the airport to the city, it's the unsightly bit between the autoroute and the sea. Not unlike Brentford, in west London, but with sunshine and a better football team.

It's where Jeannette (Ariane Ascaride) lives with her children, a daughter and a son by different fathers — one left her, the other died. She has a quick mouth and a ready anger, and her refusal to keep them in check earns her the sack from the checkout counter of a supermarket. But then she meets Marius (Gérard Meylan), a silent type who works as a security guard.



Ariane Ascaride gives a study in simmering anger in Marius Et Jeannette

He gets on with her clever, beautiful children, and gradually the couple experience the kind of physically and emotionally sustaining love missing from their lives. It wouldn't be much of a film if it didn't have a big setback somewhere along the line, but Guédiguian manoeuvres his characters to a convincing destiny.

Much of the film's attractive texture comes from the conversation of Jeannette's neighbours, who argue about racism, unemployment, theology, and the correct way to make *aïoli*. Maybe it's not so much like Brentford, after all. But this is a film that manages to be endearing without ever going soggy, and amid a group of fine performances the candid glance of Pesenti suggests a future that will bear watching.

Of the many admirable female performances in **Paradise Road** — Bruce Beresford's film about women interned in Sumatra by the Japanese between 1942 and 1945 — Glenn Close's will probably attract the loudest acclaim and, perhaps, an Oscar nomination. As Adrienne Pargiter, the wife of a tea-planter, she rallies the women in their hellish conditions and, with the help of Margaret Drummond (Pauline Collins), a Yorkshire missionary, organises the "vocal orchestra" which eventually wins them something other than fearful abuse from the hands of their captors.

The resolute Close and the unsinkable Collins are terrific in this dense, deeply upsetting film, which is based on the unpublished diaries and first-hand memories of some of the women who, having been captured after their ship was sunk en route from Singapore, endured these unspeakable horrors and privations. Also impressive are Jennifer Ehle as a young bride, Elizabeth Spriggs as a prickly matron, Julianna Margulies as an angry American, and Johanna Ter Steege as a Dutch nun. But the one you come away with, above all others, may well turn out to be Frances McDormand, an Oscar-winner last year for her pregnant Swedish-American police sergeant in Fargo. Here she turns herself into a slightly dodgy German-Jewish doctor, seemingly with Lotte Lenya as her model. By the end, you're waiting for her to give the company a chorus of Surabaya Johnny.

It would be difficult to do anything other than portray the Japanese soldiers as war criminals, and Beresford gives them the full treatment. But although most of them are treated in the stereotyped manner, he gives the worst of the lot, a secret service man called Tanaka (Stan Egi), an early scene that at least establishes some sort of background to his vileness.

In some ways, Paradise Road does not go far beyond The Bridge On The River Kwai and Tenko. It's hard to see how it could, except by making the blood and excrement more real, which Beresford certainly does once the opening chores of the fall of Singapore (banal) and the shipwreck sequence (unconvincing) are out of the way. Thereafter he presses buttons and pulls strings without mercy, and there is not much we can do except think about what it must really have been like, and try not to cry.

Surman on the mount

JAZZ
John Fordham

WHAT Herman Leonard, that evocative photographic chronicler of Lester Young in his best louche, smoke-ringed, jazz-club mood, would have made of it all is anybody's guess. The old low-life mythologies of the jazz world now tumble before the current era of technocratic teetotal workaholic horn-players, and improvisers out of the African-American traditions who are more likely to work with Gregorian chanters or classical choirs than share foggy basements with taciturn jazzers.

But this isn't new territory for the imaginative English saxophonist John Surman. In some respects, there's more sense in Surman performing with a cathedral choir than in Jan Garbarek improvising with a Gregorian-chanting ensemble as he did on the CD Officium: Surman is a former choirboy, and some of his deepest affections are for English vocal music.

On a new CD, his first for two years and a live recording from the debut of his Proverbs And Songs at Salisbury in June 1996, Surman plays baritone and soprano sax throughout, with his long-time virtuoso piano partner John Taylor on the town's Cathedral organ, and the Old Testament texts are delivered by the 75 voices of the Salisbury Festival Chorus.

Surman's early choral experiences clearly stuck, because the ensemble parts embrace a range from sombre reflection to exhilarating eruptions of sound, and the horn often meshes more intimately and illuminatingly with the voices than Jan Garbarek's partnership with the Hilliard Ensemble. There are plenty of sublime moments, like the shivery trills of Surman's soprano against the voices and Taylor's quiet, undulating organ chords on No Twilight, or the light, keening soprano dances around the singers, and there are moments that work like free music, Surman thrashing and thundering on the baritone against Taylor's angular, scything chords. Surman and Taylor have largely submerged their jazz inclinations within the English choral tradition here, but though it runs to a much smoother, swaying gait than jazz, the triumphant Adam Arisel at the close demonstrates just how many kinds of swing there are.



John Surman: deep affection for English vocal music

Proverbs And Songs (ECM, 537 7992)

Striking a sad note for charity

TRIBUTE ALBUM
Caroline Sullivan

ROCK'S store cupboard is well-stocked with songs for every occasion; but when it comes to sad events it outdoes itself. Every band in the world possesses at least one ballad that gets cigarette lighters waving empathetically at concerts.

The Diana, Princess of Wales — Tribute Album reflects her highly conventional taste in music, and most of the 36 artists who have donated songs are the sort she liked most: soft rockers such as Eric Clapton, Queen and a cast that reads like the winners' list from the 1984 Brit Awards. Many were friends: George Michael, for instance, helped organise the first Princess of Wales World Aids Day concert, exactly four years ago.

It doesn't take much to get rock stars behind worthy (ie, profile-enhancing) causes. This two-disc set is the starriest array of names yet, and it's good to be able to suspect them, for once, of altruistic motives.

Each track was chosen by the artist, their most melancholy number spruced up and in some cases re-recorded. Peter Gabriel opted for a previously unrecorded track, and Bryan Ferry, ever the classicist, put Shakespeare's Sonnet No 18 to music. "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" he inquires in that unmistakable urbane croon.

The two-hours-plus playing time allows one to reflect on two matters. One is that musical preferences have much more to do with age than with class. Diana's taste met the stereotyped Virgin FM criteria for women in their mid-30s. If only, you muse, she had discovered Luscious Jackson or Polly Harvey or Public Enemy. Her crusading instinct might have been mustered that much earlier, and at least she would have known that pop doesn't begin and end with the warm bath that is Hucknall/Lennox/Houston.

The other is that, played end to end, this album must be unbearably sad. I stopped at the end of the first CD, drained by the raw sorrow of the first 18 tracks. I'm sure if I'd stuck with it I'd have been cheered, however unintentionally, by the Spice Girls' Mama, but I wasn't in the mood.

Flaws of nature

Tim Radford

Clone: The Road to Dolly and the Path Ahead
by Gina Kolata
The Penguin Press 218pp £15.99

BACTERIA don't have sex. They try to live for ever: each single-celled creature bifurcates into two daughters or clones with identical DNA. They are the first citizens of the planet. When the going is good a bacterium has a life cycle of about 20 minutes. So is the most recent bacterial clone 20 minutes old? Or 2 billion years old?

Complex creatures are collections of special cells — brains, nerves, skin, blood, bones, eyes and so on. Even though a mammal is assembled from 1,000 billion cells, each one of those cells still contains the blueprint for the whole animal. The theory was that this was, as the embryo developed, just for the record: the DNA of a warm-blooded complex creature could be read from one cell, but not used to make another.

Dolly the lamb — from the Roslin Institute in Scotland — in July 1997 turned that idea upside down. Dolly was the great leap backward for science. Her creators — Ian Wilmut and Keith Campbell — cloned her from a six-year-old mammary cell taken from the laboratory fridge. They worked the magic by persuading an adult cell from a Finn Dorset sheep to go back to the beginning, and become an infant sheep, to be brought to term in a Scottish blackface surrogate. Dolly was presented to the world in July, six months old. Or was six years old?

Wilmut and colleagues saw Dolly as research towards a more efficient way of genetically engineering animals for "pharming": the same institute had already given a sheep a human gene so it could produce milk laden with a factor useful to cystic fibrosis and emphysema sufferers. The world saw it as a step towards bringing back the dead, cloning dictators, usurping the role of God.

Gina Kolata's book raises all the usual reactions — Brave New World, scientific hubris, Frankenstein, Faustian bargains — and then smothers them in common sense. Thirty years ago, J B S Haldane proposed cloning from talented adults as a way of improving the world's stock. In 1978, long after someone had cloned a tadpole and a carrot, there was alarm about the consequences of recombinant DNA research. James ("Double Helix") Watson characteristically snarled that "leftwing nuts and environmental kooks have been screaming we will create some kind of Frankenstein bug or Andromeda strain that will destroy us all".



Dolly surprised and shocked the world PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MacLEOD

British scientists had already begun work on fertilising eggs in the laboratory, to produce the world's first test tube baby. And by that time, Ira Levin had written The Boys From Brazil. In 1984, one pioneer of cloning had popped the foetus of a goat into the placenta and womb of a sheep and produced a goat-sheep chimera (he roasted one of them and served it at a party. He had already cloned animals from subdivided embryo cells.

So with hindsight, you could see Dolly coming. Hardly anybody did. The Roslin researchers were surprised by the fuss. The head of PPL Therapeutics, the firm formed to develop Roslin's cloning techniques commercially, wasn't. He said: "It's a step towards immortality. And if you take a step towards immortality, everybody stops and takes notice."

Didn't they just? The furore was worldwide and the revulsion immediate, but humans may indeed one day be cloned. Parents who yearn for children but cannot have them even by IVF now have another option. That doesn't mean it is a good idea: Dolly was a success, but took 277 attempts. The mother, the cell donor, was long dead, and Dolly is a different identity. Immortality is a long way off. The troubling conclusion is not that Dolly is against the laws of nature, but that, once again, nature seems to have peculiarly flexible laws. Whoever said life was simple?

Daniel in the loins' den

Sylvia Brownrigg

The Ultimate Intimacy
by Ivan Klima
Granta 287pp £12.99

MELANCHOLY has always been familiar weather to Ivan Klima — the more so, ironically, since the ban in Czechoslovakia on his work was lifted in 1990. In his new novel, whether his characters are loving or doubling, working or contemplating, melancholy is the very air they breathe.

Klima's protagonist, Daniel Vedra, is a committed pastor who suffered poverty and harassment under the totalitarian regime. In the new era, Daniel openly preaches the importance of living in faith and love; he tries to rehabilitate prisoners, to heal broken marriages. But inwardly he is deteriorating, losing confidence in the world and his work. "He was no longer convinced that there existed any ideas that were sufficiently wise, noble or significant to influence people's behaviour." In his emotional life, Daniel still mourns his first wife, who died of cancer, and finds himself at a remove from his benign second wife, Hana. He worries in his journal about his inability to be intimate: "In the absence of intimacy," he writes, "love wastes away."

Inevitably, the novel introduces Daniel to someone who brings him a new intimacy. But Bára is herself no ray of sunlight, and her husband is an exacting, embittered architect. Even the journalist Matous, who might offer Hana some companionship, is weighed down by the "solitude in which he spends his life and the purposelessness of everything".

In this atmosphere, we can hardly expect adulterous love to be joyous, nor is it. Bára expresses her passion for Daniel by saying, "If you hadn't come . . . I would be brooding on my powerlessness and death"; while Daniel, having preached fidelity for years, is bewildered by the deceit he is able to perpetrate on his own wife and children, at one point feeling "he is on the edge of a dark pit into which every living thing falls, in which nothing lasts". As the two succumb to the inevitable selfishness of their affair, various paradoxes emerge: Daniel becomes oddly less intimate to the reader as his faith ebbs away, while the sceptical Bára slowly moves closer to God.

Ivan Klíma: Czech master of the melancholic and sombre mood

Klima's explorations of the limits of faith and the thin comforts of love are as intelligent as one would expect from such an accomplished novelist. But it is hard to feel engaged with these constrained characters, and their perpetual despair is in danger of seeming comic. Gradually one comes to suspect that the source of this gloom is more their political reality than a fear of death. The sense of waste comes from a country after the Velvet Revolution in which money determines everything, and the clear lines between good and evil are gone. No character is immune from this peculiarly Eastern Bloc form of nostalgia: and it is that longing for earlier political certainties, rather than spiritual ones, that lies at the heart of this sombre tale.

Lots of lines to memorise

Alan Jenkins

By Heart: 101 Poems to Remember
ed Ted Hughes
Faber 144pp £7.99

GENIUS is memory, said Proust (or was it the other way round, and was it Proust or someone talking about him? I can't remember), but the ability to memorise poetry surely wasn't what he had in mind. The Victorians were probably the last people in England who believed that such an accomplishment was worthwhile, and even that it was an accomplishment — like needlepoint or the violin — at all.

Now Ted Hughes would like us to get some poetry off by heart again. What he doesn't want us to do is learn it by rote, the "tedium" of which, he says, "creates an aversion to learning and to poetry". As an alternative, Hughes proposes breaking a poem down to key phrases and words and forming an "unforgettable" mental image that goes with each one, such that "whenever the sequence is started the whole film will replay itself and the words of the poem will come with it as a soundtrack".

This talk of films and soundtracks will appeal to many: no aversion there. Even better, "the release of playful imagination also releases energy, and the brain soon becomes skilful at what it enjoys". But what's the point of most poetry, if not to offer "unforgettable images" of its own? And what's the objection to simply memorising those?

According to Hughes, "the more absurd, exaggerated, grotesque" we make our images, the more unforgettable the poem to which we connect them will be. Yes, yes, but most poets are one step ahead there too. Take Donne's "The Relique", which Hughes includes. In the first six lines we have graves that have "learn'd that woman-head/ To be to more than one a Bed" and "A bracelet of bright hair about the bone". Who has ever forgotten that? And where is the playful imagination that could outdo it?

It won't surprise anyone that Hughes prefers this image-making process — associated with the Catholic, pagan past, and with pleasure — to learning by rote, a Puritan/ Protestant legacy. But rote-learning can be a pleasure too, albeit one which relies to a greater extent on responsiveness to patterns of sound (and the feel of words in the mouth) than on images. Hughes gives what he calls "the audial faculty" its due, but doesn't seem to connect this with the release of energy, or fun.

He does, though, put in plenty of poems that lean heavily towards the associative-irrational ("Jabberwocky", Dickinson, Dylan Thomas), and he does appear to believe that the more regular or emphatic a poem's sound-patterns are, the more memorable the poem will be.

The majority — just — of poems here are modern, and favourites are Yeats, Eliot and Frost, with Owen and Hopkins next. No contemporaries (Heaney excepted): living poets can't remember their own stuff, so why should anyone else? Loss, memory and forgetting dominate the book. A fair number of the greatest short poems in the language are included, and it wouldn't hurt anyone to memorise them.

But memorising isn't knowing a poem "by heart". That happens when a poem speaks to you so deeply that it becomes part of you, a part of your experience. What speaks to you at such moments is what poetry is: not just images or sounds, but language, meanings, a voice. We can't forget Wyatt when he says, level and bewildered, "They flee from me, that sometime did me seek"; or Hopkins's sweet especial rural scene, or Yeats's terrible beauty: things spoken from the heart.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

A Centenary Pessoa, ed Eugénio Lisboa and L C Taylor (Carcanet, £12.95)

FORGIVE me, o gentle and fretful readers, for recommending to you a writer you may not know. This is your loss, for in Pessoa we have one of the most extraordinary poetic talents the century ever produced. He lived in Lisbon, with a childhood spent in South Africa (where he learnt English), and, returning to Lisbon, just mooched around, drinking, smoking, looking as dapper and characterless as Alec Guinness playing a bank clerk. While doing this he also made the astonishing creative decision to split himself into four separate poets: Alváro de Campos, the Glaswegian-educated naval engineer, a decadent, Whitmanesque futurist; Alberto Caiero, the intellectual rustic; and Ricardo Reis, the Jesuit-educated monarchist and composer of classically-influenced odes. The fourth poet was himself. There were other, relatively minor creations, or heteronyms, as he called them.

This is more than just weird, as if a Borges fable walked the Earth: it is a matter that gets to the very heart of the matter of poetic inspiration. This leaves me with no space to describe the book, except to say it has lots of stuff by Pessoa and others, and gets more and more interesting the more you read it.

The Pimlico Companion to Parliament, ed Christopher Silvester (Pimlico, £14)

A SPLENDID, massive collection of anecdotes and observations about Parliament, all superbly telling about the place and the various gargoyles who infest it. This is the kind of book your dad would like to get for Christmas, assuming he is the kind of dad who only reads one book a century. You might like it yourself, too, for it gives you a fuller historical picture of the nation than you may have now.

Time for Bed, by David Baddiel (Warner, £6.99)

GROAN, another celebrity rush-job novel, all skewed registers and laboured gags (or, rather, very un-laboured). But wait — what's this? Jokes? An idea? Snappy dialogue? The distinct feeling that one character is actually different from another? It looks . . . it looks like we have a real novel on our hands. Well, maybe not a real one, because to write a real one you have to have been thinking about nothing else for years and years and years — but this will do.

The Crimes of Love, by the Marquis de Sade (Peter Owen, £9.99)

THIS makes you reconsider de Sade's place as a writer. (It is amusing to get on a crowded train and ostentatiously read this book allowing, *de temps en temps*, a cruel smile to play across your features.) These are properly moral tales, with no pornographic descriptions: and although the moment you see someone described as virtuous, you know something unspeakable is going to happen to them, the Marquis points out that he knows *exactly* the difference between right and wrong — and how even virtue is its own downfall, as well as its own reward.

Guardian critics and writers choose their favourite titles of the year

Jonathan Coe

The novel that most gripped me this year was **Transgressions** by Sarah Dunant (Virago, £15.99); the media obscured most of its simple but uncomfortable ideas about female empowerment in a fog of manufactured outrage. But the book I'll be buying everyone for Christmas is **The Selected Stories of Mavis Gallant** (Bloomsbury, £25), which simply offers 887 pages of a great writer at her witty, penetrating best.

Harold Pinter

Global Spin by Sharon Beder (Green Books, £10.95) examines the systematic stifling of independent critical thought by multinational corporations — in alliance with the media and government. Beder's analysis is comprehensive, steely and clinical. **An Embarrassment of Tyrannies: 25 Years of Index on Censorship** (Gollancz, £20): so many ways to censor and repress. This Index anthology covers the field; from blatant state terrorism to subtle but equally effective modes of operation in the "free world". It's an impressive collection, with outstanding contributions from Eduardo Galeano, Yasar Kemal and a searing piece by Mumia Abu-Jamal, 15 years on Pennsylvania's death row.

Rachel Cusk

Alison Kennedy's electrifying novella **Original Bliss** (Cape, £14.99) spoke even through its reviews; her writing is both hieratic and human, and political in a sense imperfectly understood in this critical climate. Candia McWilliam's collection of short stories, **Wait Till I Tell You** (Bloomsbury, £14.99) is a superior articulation of dimensions of experience and language of which life is being stealthily robbed by fiction.

Hugo Young

I have only one book to remember and recommend. **Underworld**, by Don DeLillo, which is published in Britain in early January (Picador, £18). It is DeLillo's greatest work, a wonderful panorama of American post-war anxieties and triumphs of mind and soul. Traversing the land from coast to coast, decade to decade, DeLillo makes Underworld a metaphor for everything from garbage disposal to the hidden emotional terrain of half a century.

Natasha Walter

I loved the second volume of Doris Lessing's autobiography, **Walking in the Shade** (HarperCollins, £20). Lessing's explorations of her political, creative and romantic life are fiery and unforgettable. I read several good novels this year, though none of them without their problems. Those that will stay with me are Anne Michaels's **Fugitive Pieces** (Bloomsbury, £14.99) and Martin Amis's **Night Train** (Cape, £10.99).

Linda Grant

A book about fraudulent genius: in Mordecai Richler's new novel, **Barney's Version** (Chatto, £16.99), Barney Panofsky, drunk, fraud and possible murderer relays his side of the story, the reader wrestling with truth, lies and Alzheimer's. Panofsky is also accused of bumping off his best friend, a novelist of Brodkey-like promise who never quite gets round to producing the great work the world is waiting for. Full of ideas, fun and humane ironies.

Laura Cumming

The Undertaking by Thomas Lynch (Cape, £9.99) is a mordantly humorous and beautifully written book on coffins, urns and heartbreak by America's great mortician-poet. Buried within it are some brilliant poems, an eccentric autobiography and a comic portrait of smalltown America at the graveside.

Timothy Mo

Books which accurately reflect our times are thin on the ground, books which have an impact on them rarer still. Professor Samuel P Huntington's **The Clash of Civilisations and the Re-making of World Order** (Simon & Schuster, £16.99) does both. Huntington is a Harvard professor who doubles as US government foreign policy guru. He advances the common thesis that the nation state is obsolete but goes on to posit, without once blinking before taboos of race and religion, that the most dangerous conflicts now and to come are based on the cultural fault-lines between inimical civilisations. A skeleton key to the world as it is rather than how it shgould be.

D J Taylor

I greatly enjoyed William Palmer's under-reviewed **The Pardon of Saint Anne** (Cape, £9.99), which tracks the career of a German photographer through a turbulent thirties youth to an eventual berth in a unit of superannuated crocks on the southwestern coast of France nervously awaiting D-Day. From across the Atlantic, Mary Gaitskill's short-story collection **Because They Wanted To** (Picador, £15.99) supplied a series of compelling out-takes on some ground-down lives.

James Wood

Belatedly, I read W G Sebald's **The Emigrants** (Harvill, £6.99) for the first time this year. It is a great work of . . . what? Fiction, documentary, history. It recalls Walter Benjamin's remark that all great works found a new genre or dissolve an old one. Sebald, who is German and writes in German, lives and works in Norwich. He creates a strange, rarefied English prose, which is the wrestled product of his translator, Michael Hulse, and his revisions. The only novels this year to come near it were Philip Roth's **American Pastoral** (Cape, £15.99) and Jose Saramago's **Blindness** (Harvill, £8.99).

Nicholas Lezard

I don't get to read that many new books. The weight of hard covers is unfamiliar, it makes my arms droop and ruins my posture. But three I did like this year were Harry Thompson's **Peter Cook: A Biography** (Hodder, £18.99), mainly because it included so many of Cook's inspired jokes; Tibor Fischer's **The Collector Collector** (Secker, £12.99), for its wit and sympathy; and Will Self's **Great Apes** (Bloomsbury, £14.99), a satire both viciously funny and tenderly observed — an idea struck right in the sweet spot of the bat.

Ben Pimlott

John Brewer's **The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century** (HarperCollins, £30) is a delightfully produced and engagingly written grand tour of the origins of modern high culture. Jenny Hartley's incisive and evocative **Millions Like Us: Women's Fiction of the Second World War** (Virago, £14.99) explores a rich episode in British writing, and shows how home-front literature built the wartime myths that still shape our imagination.

Antonia Fraser

I love reading books about the practice of history (as G R Elton memorably called it). Thus **In Defence of History** by Richard J Evans (Granta, £15.99) gave me much pleasure from the beginning, including the declared aim of the title. The book is also brilliantly readable — as all history, and all references to it, should be. The discussion of objectivity in history — is it possible? is it desirable? — struck me as particularly cogent. Anyone who thinks that the truth about the past does not matter has not, perhaps, lived under a regime like that of the Soviet or Eastern bloc Communists where it is systematically distorted.

Sylvia Brownrigg

Rose Tremain's jewelled novel **The Way I Found Her** (Sinclair-Stevenson, £15.99) has left a bright imprint on my memory. It is hard to imagine a greater book of short fiction — physically as well as aesthetically — than **The Selected Stories of Mavis Gallant** (Bloomsbury, £25). For sheer weirdness, it's worth encountering Donald Antrim's **The Hundred Brothers: A Welcome Ray of Darkness** (Secker , £9.99).

John Ryle

Hail to pith and concision. Respect to the short and sweet. Malise Ruthven's **Islam: A Very Short Introduction** (Oxford, £4.99) is a clear, calm book on a tricky subject. At 150 pages it is short, but not too short to be helpful. **Guns, Germs and Steel** by Jared Diamond (Cape, £18.99) is several times as long, but it covers a lot of ground — the whole of human history, in fact. A life scientist of genially argumentative bent, Diamond provides a vigorous, if speculative, account of how European-derived civilisation came to dominate the world economy

Michael White

This year I much enjoyed Norman Rose's **Churchill: An Unruly Life** (Simon & Schuster, £12.99), a single volume biography of the old boy which is neither hagiography nor revisionist hatchet-job. This was also the year I finally attempted a still-fashionable novel about political sleaze, **The Way We Live Now** (Penguin/Oxford, £3.99). Anthony Trollope wrote it in 1875. What rascals MPs used to be.

Matthew Engel

Cricket books of 1997: Simon Hughes's wry bowling-and-bonking diaries of a hack county pro, **A Lot of Hard Yakka** (Headline, £16.99); David Hopps's alternative view of the Ashes year **We're Right Behind You, Captain** (Robson Books, £17.95), and — though it has yet to arrive in Britain yet — the remarkable evocation of Australian generations past by Gideon Haigh, **The Summer Game** (Text Publishing, Melbourne).

Evergreen symbol of fertility

Mark Cocker

IN NORWICH there has probably been a market near the city's castle for a thousand years. Its modern avatar, the largest permanent outdoor market in Britain, is still right at the town's heart, and in the days before Christmas, the customary colour of this wonderful spot assumes an additional brilliance. The throng of customers seems to grow larger; the mountain ranges of fruit and vegetables rise and are polished to a deeper gloss. And hanging with the strings of garlic and bunches of fresh herbs are seasonal favourites: wreaths of holly, packets of dates, bags of walnuts and swathes of mistletoe.

The market men push these seasonal one-offs with more than their usual street cheek. One wag was advertising his mistletoe with the ribald one liner "Goow orn missus, this'll get your ol' man to give y'a'biggun this Christmas!", as he held a sprig up, pursing his lips for an imaginary kiss.

I wonder if these characters realise the plant they sell each winter was a fertility symbol for thousands of years before their market existed.

Mistletoe is a woody shrub that parasitises other trees. In Britain it occurs in central England, especially around the River Severn and its catchment. However, in East Anglia it's a rarity and most of the crop on sale in Norwich was probably cultivated in Europe, especially France where it is a common wild plant. In Britain its most frequent hosts are poplar, lime, willow, hawthorn or apple, and when these trees shed their leaves in winter the evergreen mistletoe remains as vigorous and colourful as ever.

Such a display of life in the season of death gave mistletoe a particular aura for pre-Christian societies, especially when it grew on one of its more unusual hosts, the oak, which already had status as a sacred tree. In the Golden Bough, the anthropologist James Frazer suggested that the shamans of pagan Europe believed oak-mistletoe a direct gift from the heavens, arising from trees previously struck by lightning, which was for them the most potent visual expression of divine power.

The plant was collected at propitious dates but particularly on midsummer's eve when, like the year itself, its powers were thought to be at their fullest. It was a remedy for many forms of wound and illness and its gift to cure epilepsy may be rooted in a grain of truth, since the berries do contain an antispasmodic agent. Its ability to promote life and health also extended to the fertility of crops, livestock and even humans. Newly-delivered sheep or cattle were fed on freshly-cut branches, and barren women carried it around their neck to help them conceive.

Mistletoe was also used to decorate the home in mid-winter, when it was intended to symbolise the rebirth of life in the new year. This solstice practice almost certainly lies at the back of its inclusion in subsequent rites centring on the birth of the Christian god. But unlike holly and other magical plants of the pagan world, mistletoe was never truly integrated into Christianity's own botanical symbolism. So why has mistletoe emerged as the plant most synonymous with Christmas?

The market man had no answers for this question, but the mistletoe advice he did shout had the authority of history: "Only 50 pence a bunch! Best mistletoe! The cheapest way to spice up your love-life."

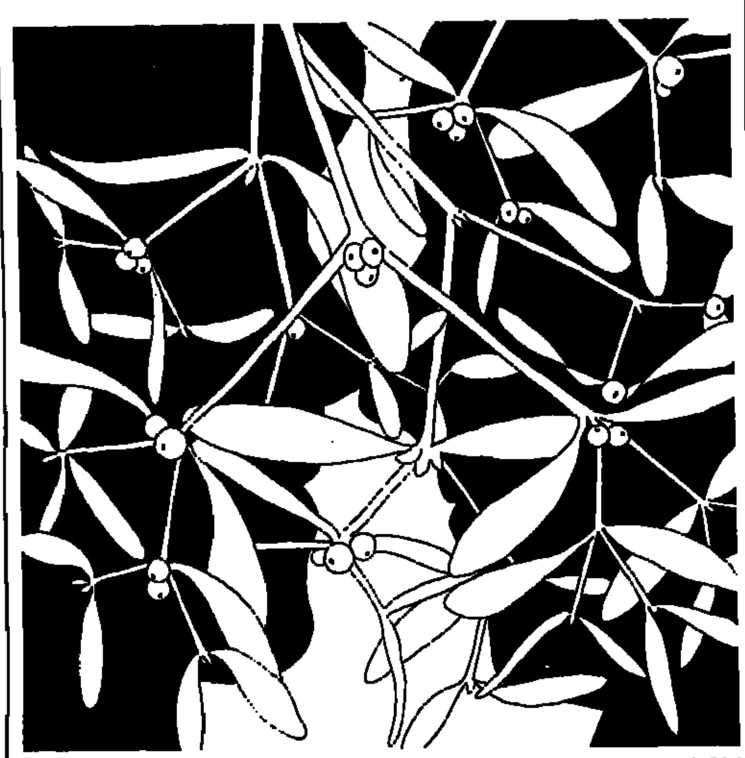


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Chess Leonard Barden

WHATEVER their reservations about the format, the entire grandmaster élite bar Kasparov assembled on the starting grid for the first knockout World Championship which started at Groningen in the Netherlands on December 9. With a minimum prize of £3,000 just for losing two games in the opening round, they could hardly have stayed away. The 96 invitees included 53 GMs with 2,600 ratings, among them seven of the 2,700 élite.

All participants play two-game mini-matches at standard time rates and, in the event of a 1-1 tie, two more rapid-play games at 25 minutes per player; then it comes down to five-minute blitz chess. The 68 in the first round include Britain's Wells, and the 28 round-two seeds include Adams, Sadler and Short. Everybody agrees that the championship is something of a lottery, but not for Karpov, who, as defending champion, is seeded to the final where he will play a six-game match against the exhausted lone survivor from the 96.

A bizarre twist is that the final match on January 2-8 takes place at the International Olympic Committee's headquarters at Lausanne, as part of a campaign by the IOC chief Samaranch and the Fide president Ilyumzhinov to have chess accepted as part of the Olympic Games.

Karpov has the odds stacked in his favour, but it is hoped that Kramnik or Anand can win through and so put pressure on Kasparov for a unity match with his breakaway PCA title, which he shows no sign of wanting to defend.

Kramnik and Anand have battled in tournaments all over Europe for the last year, with the Russian having the edge. Their latest game, at the Investbanka tournament in Belgrade, shows how fast running passed pawns can beat a piece.

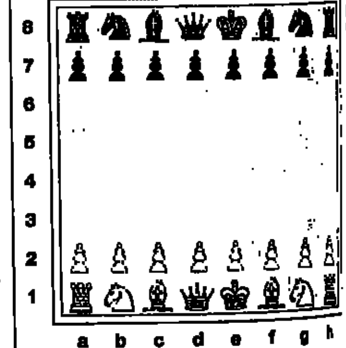
Kramnik-Anand

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 d4 c6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 An interesting switch from Botvinnik's 7 . . . b5 8 e5 g5 9 Nxg5 which has been analysed beyond move 30.

8 Bg3 b5 9 Be2 Bb7 10 e5 Nh5 11 a4 a6 12 Nxg5!? A serious attempt at refutation; Kramnik gambits a piece for a bind on the position. **Nxg3 13 Nxf7 Kxf7 14 fxg3 Kg8 15 0-0 Nd7 16 Bg4** Showing confidence. White can bail out for a draw by 16 Bxc4 bxc4 17 Qg4+. **Qe7 17 Ne4 Rh7 18 Nd6 Rb8 19 b4 h5 20 Bh3 Bh6 21 Kh1 Bg5 22 Qc2 Rg7 23 Qe2 Ba8 24 Qxh5 Rf8 25 Ne4 c5 26 Nxg5 Bd5!** Not Rxg5 27 Bxe6+. White should now try 27 Nxe6 Rxf1+ 28 Rxf1 Bxe6 29 Bxe6+ Qxe6 30 bxc5 with an unclear position.

27 Nf3? cxb4 28 axb5 axb5 29 Nh4 Qg5 30 Rxf8+ Nxf8 31 Qe8 Rf7 32 Nf3 Qg6 33 Qxb5 b3 Black is two pawns down but his b and c pawns are decisive. **34 Rf1 Qd3 35 Kg1 Qe3+ 36 Kh1 c3 37 Bxe6 Bxe6 38 d5 Rxf3 39 gxf3 Bh3 40 Qc4 Bxf1 41 Qg4+ Kh7 42 e6 Ng6 43 Resigns.**

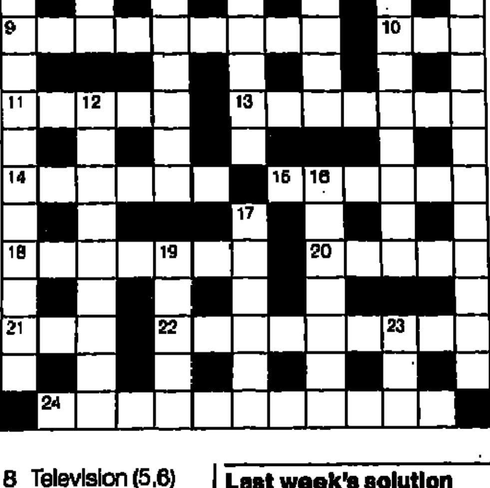
No 2502



A familiar position provides the setting for an offbeat puzzle. You have to construct a five-move game where White opens 1 e4 and Black's fifth move is Nxh1 mate. Sounds easy, but at least one move is tricky.

No 2501: 1 Rc1 Rfd8? 2 Nxe6 Kxe6 3 f4! wins the knight. If Ncf6 exf3 en passant 4 Bc4 mate.

Quick crossword no. 396



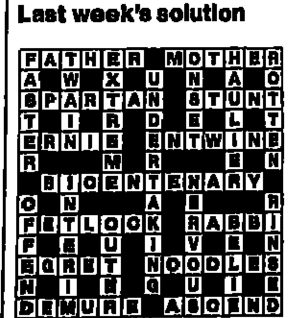
Across

1 Woman tending woolly animals (11)
9 Drawn (9)
10 Odd — spirit (3)
11 Fraud (5)
13 Clear quartz (7)
14 Gripping tool (6)
15 From side to side (6)
18 Closest (7)
20 Sea duck (5)
21 Wrath (3)
22 Show to be involved (9)
24 Material for footwear (4,7)

Down

2 Stolen — sought by the police (3)
3 Daub (7)
4 Lure (6)
5 Unreliable — dangerous (5)
6 Birthplace of William Shakespeare (9)
7 Cover for a cooking utensil (8,3)
8 Television (5,6)
12 Queen of Great Britain (9)
16 Pharmacist (7)
17 Of prime importance (6)
19 Enforced absence from home (5)
23 Imitate — primate (3)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

HAMMAMET in Tunisia was a welcoming venue for the World Championships this year. Warm weather, sandy beaches, good restaurants and golf courses are the right environment for bridge — even losing has its compensations. Many bridge enthusiasts had come to Hammamet to combine a holiday with a chance to see the World Championships live on Vugraph. This is a kind of cinema screen, which shows a featured match as it is played. You can share the drama of the big decisions — or laugh at the flights of fancy of the more imaginative players.

Yes, I am afraid I have to confess to yet another unsuccessful operation. It just happened that the room where the players who were appearing on Vugraph actually sat overlooked the hotel swimming pool. My mind may have been on the scantily clad sunbathers instead of on my cards as I picked up this hand:

♠3 ♥AKQ109862 ♦74 ♣85

I am one of those who think of an eight-card suit as a siren-call, an irresistible invitation to commit mayhem. The conditions were perfect. My partner passed as dealer, non-vulnerable against vulnerable, and my right-hand opponent opened with four spades. What call would you make?

Yes, I know that five hearts is the obvious bid. But it's four and a half thousand miles from New York to Hammamet. Had I really travelled all that way to make a mundane bid like five hearts? Could I look myself in the mirror if, after 20 years of bridge decadence, I had sunk to this level of conformity? The opponents surely had a vulnerable game, and very probably a vulnerable slam. What I wanted them to do was double me in five hearts, not bid five or even six spades. So I bid five clubs!

As expected, this was doubled by my left-hand opponent, and after two passes I "rescued" myself to five hearts. "Double!" said LHO again. Everything was working to plan. Now, if only my partner would avoid giving me preference to clubs!

But poor Michael Rosenberg, my long-suffering partner, had no idea what I was doing. I could have bid 4NT over four spades if I had a two-suited hand, so he might have been able to work out that five clubs was a complete spoof. But partnership trust is more important than the odd swing over a long tournament like a World Championship, and Michael eventually decided to believe me. Six clubs, he bid, and when this was doubled I had to retreat to six hearts with shame all over my face. This was the deal:

North
♠A64
♥73
♦10652
♣J973

West
♠98
♥J5
♦AKQJ8
♣A1064

East
♠KQJ1075[illegible]
♥4
♦93
♣KQ2

South
♠3
♥AKQ109862
♦74
♣85

Six hearts was doubled by the [illegible] dience, the waiter, the girls by the pool and my left-hand opponent. Of course, I had to concede a [illegible] penalty, and since the contract [illegible] the other room was the mundane, conformist five hearts doubled, [illegible] brilliance cost me 5 IMPs and [illegible] acerbic comments from Michael. [illegible] you're going to operate, it's wise to be a surgeon.

Football France 98: World Cup draw

Scotland the Brave to face mighty Brazilians

David Lacey on the mixed fortunes of British teams at Marseille

ENGLAND managed to avoid the shorter straws when the draw for the 1998 World Cup was made in a chilly Stade Velodrome here last week, but some familiar stubble fields could await them in the later stages of the tournament in the shape of Germany or Argentina.

In the opening round Glenn Hoddle's team will share Group G with Romania, Colombia and Tunisia, a task which is tricky though hardly awesome. Being unseeded has hardly proved a handicap. England will not have to face the stronger seeds — Brazil, Argentina and Germany — and they have stayed clear of an early renewal of hostilities with Italy.

Winning the group could throw Croatia, Germany, and Italy or France across England's route to the final. Coming second might mean them having to beat Argentina, Holland and Brazil, the holders.

England will begin their latest quest to recapture the fading glories of 1966 here on Monday June 15 when they face Tunisia, ostensibly the weakest team in the group but, as they have proved in the past, a country with strong French football connections and capable of causing the odd surprise.

Seven days later Hoddle's team will meet Romania in Toulouse. This match could do much to decide the group winners, although England's encounter with Colombia in Lens on June 26 could turn out to be crucial in this section.

Scotland have been less fortunate than England, not so much because they will play in Group A with Brazil, the World Cup favourites, but because Craig Brown's team will almost certainly have to overcome Norway to reach the second phase by occupying one of the top two places. Not that Morocco, who were running West Germany close as long ago as 1970, can be regarded as pushovers.

At least Scotland will share the privilege of kicking off the tournament when they meet Brazil in the new Stade de France at St Denis, on the northern outskirts of Paris, on June 10. Morocco and Norway meet in Montpellier later the same day.

The Scots then travel to Bordeaux to face Norway before meeting Morocco in St Etienne. Although the 1998 World Cup will not involve the huge distances that finalists faced in the United States three-and-a-half years ago, players and supporters will have covered a lot of kilometres by the time the final is played in St Denis on July 12.

This time there is no obvious "group of death", but Group D, which involves Spain, Nigeria, Paraguay and Bulgaria, looks the tightest. Certainly the hosts have got off relatively lightly. France and Denmark should see off South Africa and Saudi Arabia to go through from Group C.

France 98 The complete picture

Group A (Seeded team first)
Brazil
Scotland
Morocco
Norway

Wednesday June 10
Brazil v Scotland St Denis (4.30pm; BST)
Morocco v Norway Montpellier (8pm)
Tuesday June 16
Scotland v Norway Bordeaux (4.30pm)
Brazil v Morocco Nantes (8pm)
Tuesday June 23
Brazil v Norway Marseille (8pm)
Scotland v Morocco St Etienne (8pm)

Group B
Italy
Chile
Cameroon
Austria

Thursday June 11
Italy v Chile Bordeaux (4.30pm)
Cameroon v Austria Toulouse (8pm)
Wednesday June 17
Chile v Austria St Etienne (4.30pm)
Italy v Cameroon Montpellier (8pm)
Tuesday June 23
Italy v Austria St Denis (3pm)
Chile v Cameroon Nantes (3pm)

Group C
France
South Africa
Saudi Arabia
Denmark

Friday June 12
Saudi Arabia v Denmark Lens (4.30pm)
France v South Africa Marseille (8pm)
Thursday June 18
South Africa v Denmark Toulouse (4.30pm)
France v Saudi Arabia St Denis (8pm)
Wednesday June 24
France v Denmark Lyon (3pm)
South Africa v Saudi Arabia Bordeaux (3pm)

Group D
Spain
Nigeria
Paraguay
Bulgaria

Friday June 12
Paraguay v Bulgaria Montpellier (1.30pm)
Saturday June 13
Spain v Nigeria Nantes (1.30pm)
Friday June 19
Nigeria v Bulgaria Paris (4.30pm)
Spain v Paraguay St Etienne (8pm)
Wednesday June 24
Spain v Bulgaria Lens (8pm)
Nigeria v Paraguay Toulouse (8pm)

Group E
Holland
Belgium
South Korea
Mexico

Saturday June 13
South Korea v Mexico Lyon (4.30pm)
Holland v Belgium St Denis (8pm)
Saturday June 20
Belgium v Mexico Bordeaux (1.30pm)
Holland v South Korea Marseille (8pm)
Thursday June 25
Holland v Mexico St Etienne (3pm)
Belgium v South Korea Paris (3pm)

Group F
Germany
United States
Yugoslavia
Iran

Sunday June 14
Yugoslavia v Iran St Etienne (1.30pm)
Monday June 15
Germany v United States Paris (8pm)
Sunday June 21
Germany v Yugoslavia Lens (4.30pm)
United States v Iran Lyon (8pm)
Thursday June 25
Germany v Iran Montpellier (8pm)
United States v Yugoslavia Nantes (8pm)

Group G
Romania
Colombia
England
Tunisia

Monday June 15
England v Tunisia Marseille (1.30pm)
Romania v Colombia Lyon (4.30pm)
Monday June 22
Colombia v Tunisia Montpellier (4.30pm)
Romania v England Toulouse (8pm)
Friday June 26
Romania v Tunisia St Denis (8pm)
Colombia v England Lens (8pm)

Group H
Argentina
Japan
Jamaica
Croatia

Sunday June 14
Argentina v Japan Toulouse (4.30pm)
Jamaica v Croatia Lens (8pm)
Saturday June 20
Japan v Croatia Nantes (4.30pm)
Sunday June 21
Argentina v Jamaica Paris (1.30pm)
Friday June 26
Argentina v Croatia Bordeaux (8pm)
Japan v Jamaica Lyon (8pm)

Knock-out stages

Second round

Saturday June 27
Game 2 Group B winners v Group A runners-up Marseille (3.30pm)
Game 1 Group A winners v Group B runners-up Paris (8pm)
Sunday June 28
Game 3 Group C winners v Group D runners-up Lens (3.30pm)
Game 4 Group D winners v Group C runners-up St Denis (8pm)
Monday June 29
Game 6 Group F winners v Group E runners-up Montpellier (3.30pm)
Game 5 Group E winners v Group F runners-up Toulouse (8pm)
Tuesday June 30
Game 7 Group G winners v Group H runners-up Bordeaux (3.30pm)
Game 8 Group H winners v Group G runners-up St Etienne (8pm)

Quarter-finals

Friday July 3
Game B Game 2 winners v Game 3 winners St Denis (3.30pm)
Game A Game 1 winners v Game 4 winners Nantes (8pm)
Saturday July 4
Game C Game 5 winners v Game 8 winners Marseille (3.30pm)
Game D Game 6 winners v Game 7 winners Lyon (8pm)

Semi-finals

Tuesday July 7
Game A winners v Game C winners Marseille (8pm)
Wednesday July 8
Game B winners v Game D winners St Denis (8pm)

3rd place play-off

Semi-final losers Paris (8pm)

World Cup final
Sunday July 12
St Denis (8pm)

The venues

St Denis Stade de France **Capacity:** 80,000 **Matches:** Four group games (including opening ceremony), one second round game, one quarter-final, second semi-final and the final

Lens Stade Felix-Bollaert **Capacity:** 42,000 **Matches:** Five group games, one second round game

FRANCE 98

Paris Parc des Princes **Capacity:** 49,500 **Matches:** Four group games, one second round game, third place play-off

Nantes Stade de la Beaujoire **Capacity:** 40,000 **Matches:** Five group games, one quarter-final

St Etienne Stade Geoffroy-Guichard **Capacity:** 36,000 **Matches:** Five group games, one second round game

Lyon Stade de Gerland **Capacity:** 44,000 **Matches:** Five group games, one quarter-final

Bordeaux Parc Lescure **Capacity:** 30,000 **Matches:** Five group games, one second round game

Montpellier Stade de la Mosson **Capacity:** 37,500 **Matches:** Five group games, one second round game

Marseille Stade Velodrome **Capacity:** 60,000 **Matches:** Four group games, one second round game, one quarter-final, first semi-final

Toulouse Stade Municipal **Capacity:** 37,000 **Matches:** Five group games, one second round game

GRAPHIC: STEVE VILLERS, MATT BUCK, GRAPHIC NEWS

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Nicol is on top of the world

PETER NICOL of Scotland notched up a riveting 9-15, 15-9, 9-15, 15-12, 15-5 victory over the world's No 1 squash player Jansher Khan to retain the Mahindra International tournament — the circuit's third richest title — in Bombay. Not only has Nicol now defeated Khan three times in a row, but he also moved above him in the computer points table.

However, the left-handed Scot is unlikely to become the first Briton to lead the world rankings, to be announced at the end of this month, as the great Pakistani has another minor tournament coming up before that and should earn enough points to reclaim the No 1 spot he has held for much of the past decade.

THE miserable form of the West Indies cricket team, in particular their batsmen, was confirmed with their 3-0 defeat by Pakistan, the first time they have suffered a series whitewash in 69 years. After losing the first two Tests by an innings, they narrowly avoided the same fate in Karachi, losing by 10 wickets. West Indies scored 216 in their first innings and, despite a fiery century from Carl Hooper, could only manage 212 in reply to Pakistan's first innings total of 417, achieved on the back of a record-breaking, 298-run partnership between openers Aamir Sohail and Ijaz Ahmed. It left Pakistan needing only 10 runs to win on the fourth day. West Indies coach Clive Lloyd said: "It has gone from bad to worse. This is the best side in the West Indies and they should perform as such."

ENGLAND pace bowler Devon Malcolm, out of contract at Derbyshire, announced that he is to join Northamptonshire. Malcolm, who was also being sought by Worcestershire, said: "I have had good times at Derbyshire, but I believe the right decision will be to move to Northamptonshire."

HEROL "BOMBER" Graham, the 38-year-old former British and European middleweight champion, captured the World Boxing Council international super-middleweight title by registering a unanimous points victory over Vinny Pazienza of the United States at Wembley Arena.

ITALIAN police and football authorities were apportioned a large part of the blame for the violence that marred England's World Cup qualifier in Rome in October. Fifa, the game's governing body, concluded that ticketing and policing arrangements were not satisfactory.

FOOTBALL manager George Graham became one of the highest paid bosses in Britain when he signed a new long-term contract, believed to be worth around $1 .7 million a year, with Leeds United. Graham, who arrived at Elland Road 15 months ago, expressed surprise at his team's good form this season. "When you bring in nine new players within a year it's hard for them to blend," he said.

THE world of British football was mourning the death of Billy Bremner, the former Leeds and Scotland midfielder, who died in a Doncaster hospital after a suspected heart attack. He was 54.

Football results

FA CUP: Second round: Bournemth 3, Bristol C 1; Cambridge 1, Stevnage 1; Cardiff 3, Hendon 1; Cheltnham 1, Boreham Wood 1; Colchester 1, Hereford 1; Fulham 1, Southend 0; Grimsby 2, Chesterfield 2; Hednesford 0, Darlington 1; Lincoln 2, Emley 2; Macclsfld 0, Walsall 7; Northmptn 1, Basingstke 1; Oldham 2, Blackpool 1; Peterboro 3, Dag & Red 2; Preston 2, Notts County 2; Rotherham 6, Kings Lynn 0; Scunthorpe 1, Ilkeston Tn 1; Torquay 1, Watford 1; Wigan 2, York 1; Wisbech 0, Bristol R 2.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Aston Villa 3, Coventry 0; Blackburn Rovers 3, Bolton 1; Derby County 2, West Ham Utd 0; Leeds Utd 0, Everton 0; Leicester City 1, Crystal Palace 1; Liverpool 1, Manchester Utd 3; Newcastle Utd 0, Arsenal 1; Shelf Wed 2, Barnsley 1; Tottenham 1, Chelsea 6; Wimbledon 1, Southampton 0.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: Division One: Bury 0, Middlesbro 1; Crewe 2, Huddrsfld 5; Man City 0, Wolves 1; Norwich 2, Sheff Utd 1; Nottm For 2, Bradford 2; Portsmth 2, Stoke 0; Port Vale 0, Birminghm 1; QPR 0, Sunderlnd 1; Reading 2, Charlton 0; Swindon 4, Oxford 1; Tranmere 1, Ipswich 1; WBA 3, Stockport 2.

Division Three: Scarboro 1, Rochdale 0.

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP: First round: Cowdnbth 0, Montrose 0; East Fife 2, Stranraer 3; Fraserburgh P, Clyde P.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Aberdeen 1, St Johnstone 1; Dundee Utd 0, Dunfermline 0; Hearts 2, Motherwell 0; Kilmarnock 0, Celtic 0; Rangers 1, Hibernian 0.

First Division: Airdrie 0, Dundee 0; Falkirk 0, Partick 1; Raith 0, Morton 0; Stirling A 1, Ayr 1; St Mirren 2, Hamilton 1.

Third Division: Arbroath 3, E Stirling 0.